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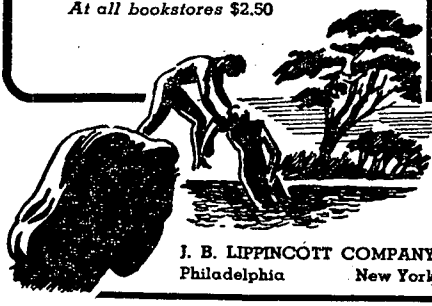

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By this time most of you know the results of the International Poll which EQMM conducted to determine the ten best active mystery writers. In alphabetical order, the winners were: Margery Allingham, John Dickson Carr, Raymond Chandler, Agatha Christie, Erle Stanley Gardner, Ngaio Marsh, Ellery Queen, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Georges Simenon, Rex Stout.

One of the many writers who participated in the voting was Craig Rice. In naming her ten best, Craig batted a major-league .500 — that is, five of her ten nominations were among the ultimate winners. Craig has given us permission to quote some of the reasons behind her choices.

JOHN DICKSON CARR: "*for consistently fine performance.*"

RAYMOND CHANDLER: "*he combines the hardboiled school with a genuine love for his characters.*"

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER: "*for consistent performance which has given the reading public much pleasure over a long period of years.*"

MARY ROBERTS RINEHART: "*for setting a standard which some of us, especially me, might do well to follow.*"

The other five Craig selected? Their names must remain a state secret — Craig Rice doesn't want to lose friends and influence people!

GOODBYE FOREVER

by CRAIG RICE

THE GIRL WAS SMALL AND IF SHE did have an interesting figure her inexpensive clothes were doing their best to keep it a secret. She wore brown, from her tiny but substantial oxfords to the rims of her thick-lensed glasses.

She put her glass of beer down on the bar, looked at John J. Malone anxiously, and said: "I hope you'll know what to do."

"Do or die," the little Chicago lawyer said, "and frankly I don't feel very enthusiastic about either prospect." He wondered how he would have felt if Betty Castle had been the girl he would have picked to be marooned with on a desert island, along with a case of canned goods, two bottles of rye, and a copy of the Kinsey report. Instead, she was the press agent for the Number Two band on the Hit Parade and was bringing him a possible client at a time when the office rent was three months overdue.

"If Larry would only tell me what it's all about —" Betty Castle said. "But there are some things you just cannot pry out of him without —"

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"Say no more," Malone said. "I understand. You're not that kind of a girl. But just what did you mean when you said that you hoped I'd be — as you put it so delicately — drunk?"

Betty Castle said, "Mr. Malone, I thought that if you were — he'd talk to you more freely. In fact, I told Larry you probably would be. I hope you don't mind." She looked at him and said, "But you're —"

"Don't worry about a thing," Malone assured her. "As a hobby I've taken up impersonating myself."

"Another thing, Mr. Malone —" Betty Castle finished her beer and said, "I didn't tell him I was going to talk to you first."

"In that case," Malone told her, "you'd better make yourself inconspicuous and get out of here."

A shadow couldn't have slipped out of Joe the Angel's City Hall bar more inconspicuously if it had used the rear entrance. Malone had a few quiet words with Joe the Angel, who nodded understandingly and warned Malone that pretending to be drunk was going to be far, far more difficult than doing what came naturally.

Malone began rehearsing. Three times he tried to put his elbow on the bar and four times he missed. He made a noble try at sitting upright with only reasonable success. Finally he heard the magic voice listened to every week by radio listeners from coast to coast.

The voice said, "You're John J. Malone, aren't you?"

"If I'm not," Malone said, "I'm certainly going to be surprised when I wake up in the morning." He fumbled through his pockets for a nonexistent cigar. "Who you are, the hell? Or do I mean whom? I mean, who the hell you are, and may I buy you a drink?"

Joe the Angel said, "You can't buy anyone a drink, Malone. Not without —"

"I know," the lawyer said bitterly, "a slice of the root. The root of all evil."

The newcomer with the golden voice said, "I'd like to buy Mr. Malone a drink, if I may."

Joe the Angel managed an almost surreptitious wink at Malone and said, "Okay, what'll it be?"

"Same thing," Malone said. He decided that one more drink of plain ginger ale was going to be more than he could survive, but he managed to get the stuff down in one quick gulp, turned around, and said belligerently, "I'll fight any hat in the place at the drop of a man."

"Mr. Malone, I need your help."

"Never can resist a pal asking for help," Malone said. "Are you a pal? Did you pay for the last drink? Then you're a pal, pal." He paused to sing a line from *Kathleen Mavourneen*. "Which one of us is Damon, and which one of us is Pythias, and what is your name anyway?"

"My name is Larry Lee. And I'd like you to listen to a piece of music."

"Always glad to oblige a friend, friend," Malone said. "I hope it's

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By Killarney's Lakes and Dells." He whistled a bar of it. While whistling he stole a glance at Larry Lee. The handsome young orchestra leader looked as if he had just left a haunted house.

"We can't talk here," Larry Lee said hoarsely.

Malone was about to suggest the Public Library when Joe the Angel tactfully indicated the back room. Malone allowed himself to be navigated into one of its booths. A moment later Joe the Angel arrived with a tray, slid a big cup in front of Malone, a glass in front of Larry Lee, and said: "One cuppa coffee, Mister, and Malone he's sober like a dead judge."

Malone lifted the cup gingerly. It contained straight rye. He wondered what was in Larry Lee's glass.

Larry Lee said: "Do you know a song called *Goodbye Forever?*"

Joe the Angel, not noticing that the question had been addressed to Malone, squared off like a *basso* about to boot the prompter up into the balcony and kicked off. His voice shivered Malone's teacup.

The famous Larry Lee moaned and buried his face in his hands. "I'm afraid," he whispered. "Terribly afraid." He emptied his glass and said, "I think I've killed somebody."

"Happens all the time," the little lawyer said sympathetically. "Good thing you came to me." He shoved the empty glass and cup at Joe the Angel and said, "You better refill these," then added, "*and don't sing.*"

"He isn't dead," Larry Lee said, "but that song —"

Malone nodded. "*Goodbye Forever* by a guy named Tosti. No good for quartet singing unless your tenor has a broken heart and a good beginning on tomorrow's hangover."

The replacements arrived fast, and went down faster. Larry Lee shoved a bill at Joe the Angel and said, "I'm due at the broadcast. I hope you'll come with me, Mr. Malone. My car's right outside."

"Sure," Malone said. "Anything for a pal, pal." He allowed himself to be led through the bar, across the sidewalk, and into the car, which moved gently forward with a sound like a contented cat.

"Studio," Larry Lee said.

Malone leaned back against the custom-made cushions and prepared to listen. He began to wonder if this was a press-agent gag that Betty Castle had dreamed up.

"There's a stupid superstition among some musicians," Larry Lee said, his face pale in the shadows, "that — that song — or any part of it — and especially those first four notes — can never be played in a radio broadcast without some — well, some terrible disaster happening immediately."

"An earthquake?" Malone said hopefully. "We've had everything else in Chicago."

"This isn't funny, Mr. Malone," Larry Lee said, in a voice that was entirely too calm. "It means — death."

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The car turned right into Wacker Drive. Larry Lee laughed nervously.

"I don't believe in superstitions myself," he said. "No intelligent person does."

Malone crossed his fingers behind his back and said, "Of course not."

Larry Lee looked at his watch. "I'd better tell you this fast. I have a new song coming out. Looks like — a hit. Mr. Malone, I don't need to tell you what that means to me — as far as money is concerned."

"I'd rather guess," Malone said, "and I don't handle income tax matters."

"The name of the song," Larry Lee said, "is — *Kiss Me Goodbye Again.* We're featuring it in tonight's show. I worked up a special arrangement, using Tosti's *Goodbye.* The boys in the band refused to play it — even to rehearse it. Especially Art Sample. He's a nervous guy anyhow. All clarinet players are nervous and he's the best in the business. Both ways. And superstitious —"

"I know," Malone said sympathetically. "He wouldn't walk under a black cat if a ladder crossed his path."

Larry Lee said, "Mr. Malone, I'm an even-tempered man. But once in a while I don't like to be exed up. Crossed, that is. Especially by the boys in my own band."

The wind from Lake Michigan became frighteningly cool.

"I wrote another arrangement," Larry Lee said. "It was a last-minute job. On purpose. Too late to rehearse. Art Sample may be the top clarinet player in the country, but me, I'm the top arranger. I worked in those four notes from Tosti's *Goodbye* so skillfully that nobody — *nobody* — would know what he was playing until he'd already played it. And that especially goes for Art Sample."

Malone started to whistle the four notes, caught himself just in time, and said, "It couldn't be such a bad arrangement that you had to have a lawyer along."

His companion managed a nervous laugh. "Understand, Malone. Building a band is like building a house. Every brick, every stone, every timber has got to be in exactly the right place. If one of them should slip, the whole building would fall. See? That's why I've taken out such heavy insurance on all the boys."

"Anything particular you expect to happen to any one of the boys in the band?" Malone asked as casually as he could.

"No! No, no, *no!*" Larry Lee buried his face in his slender, beautiful hands. "But if something should happen because of my stubborn insistence about — getting in those four notes of music — I'd be a murderer!" He managed what Malone suspected was a well-rehearsed sob, looked up quickly, and said, "I'm sorry to bother you with all this. But if you don't mind coming to the broadcast, and watching it from the control room —"

"I wouldn't mind seeing it," Malone assured him, "from a flagpole

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on Mars." He wondered what kind of a legal fee he should charge for services like these.

Seventeen minutes later, in the steaming glass box of the control room, Malone decided the fee would have to be a large one. A last spasm of rehearsal sent people milling around the studio, loping earnestly in and out of the control room. The ones who had the bewildered look were, Malone suspected, relatives of Larry Lee's sponsor.

The others joked and laughed, but their eyes weren't in it. Underneath the chatter and the buzzing Malone sensed a kind of silent terror, rising and trembling like the pointer on a pressure gauge. Now and then words and phrases bounced back from the plate-glass wall. "— I hear they're picking him up for another twenty-six weeks —" Then a sound engineer began to swear methodically at a telephone, a pencil dropped noiselessly to the floor, a female voice shrilled, "Well, if she hasn't sense enough to see that —" Always there was the overtone of the control-room engineer quietly swearing at sounds that never came just right.

Then there was silence. The red hand of the clock began its last warning circle. Thirty seconds. Twenty seconds. A blast of laughter from the preceding program. Ten seconds, and the red hand still moving.

Malone wished he were anywhere else in the world.

A sweet ruffle of violins, and the program was on the air. For a few moments, Malone didn't seem to hear anything. Then he began to feel the quietness in the hot little control room. It was quiet, but too uneasy to be that quiet. There was something in the performance coming over the loudspeaker that he didn't quite like. And then Larry Lee's band swung into the song he had been waiting for.

Goodbye Forever. A heartbreaking eternal goodbye from beyond the grave. . . .

A cold little hand slipped into his. Malone turned and saw a very frail blonde girl who looked at him from behind terrified eyes.

"Mr. Malone," she whispered, "please don't let anything happen to him. *He* —"

Malone resisted an impulse to put his arm around her. Instead, he patted her hand and said, in his best cell-side manner, "My dear girl, there's nothing to worry about!"

He didn't know her from Eve's other apple, and he didn't have the faintest idea who *he* was, but with all his heart he hoped that what he had told her was true. Maybe because of the way she looked. A little like a pale yellow moonbeam. Soft, fair hair that looked as though it would curl endearingly around his finger, wide eyes that promised to turn violet at any moment.

Suddenly he remembered who she was. Mrs. Larry Lee. The wife Larry Lee's smart little press agent, Betty Castle, kept under wraps. Because

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five million bobbysoxers would secede from their union if they knew that America's Number One glamour boy had a kitchen with a wife in it.

All at once the music caught up with them. He watched the band through the plate-glass window.

Two clarinet players rose. They might have been any two clarinet players in any band in the world. One of them was short, squat, oily-haired. The other was tall, blond, and slender. Somehow, the microphone managed to match them up for size.

Those four notes, that had been so skillfully hidden in the orchestration that no one would know what he was playing, until he had played it —

"*Goodbye — forever —*"

The high, fluting notes were almost a pain in Malone's ears. For just one moment, he closed his eyes. He heard one of the control-room engineers mutter something that might have been a prayer, but probably wasn't. Then he looked into the studio.

The black-and-silver clarinet slipped from the hands of Art Sample as though it were a discarded toy. For one instant his eyes were wide with something like surprise. Then slowly, terribly slowly, he crumpled to the floor.

Larry Lee's frantic signaling to the orchestra for more volume was of no use. The sounds of the instruments died out, one by one. First the bass player, then the brasses, then the woodwinds and strings, and at last the pianist, one hand suspended in the middle of a rolling chord.

Technicians in the control room did frantic things with push buttons and telephones. Music on the network began again, but not from Studio B, where Larry Lee stood as still as though he'd been left overnight in a deep freeze, where the musicians were silent, and where Art Sample lay on the floor, his clarinet six inches away from his hand.

Nobody moved. It was as though everyone had forgotten how to move. Even the pageboy stood still. The flawless mechanism of the network didn't have any rules or procedures to cover situations like this one.

Then suddenly everybody started at once, and Malone moved first. He shoved Lorna Lee away from his shoulder, shook the pageboy into something remotely resembling consciousness, and said, "Which door leads into the studio?"

Automatically, the pageboy said, "You can't go in there, sir."

"Prove it," Malone said. He picked what he hoped was the right door and shoved it open.

In the studio, life stood still. It was as though everybody had expected this, and now that it had happened, everybody stopped like figures on the screen when the projector goes dead. A stranger walking in would have thought everyone in the place had been stuffed and mounted, and looking as un-lifelike as art could make them.

Suddenly everybody started to move at once, and again Malone moved first. Nina Shields, the vocalist

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whose voice was almost as well known from coast to coast as her face and figure, was frantically demanding that someone call a doctor. Jack Shields, her big-time gambler-husband who insisted on accompanying her to every broadcast, was looking around for a target for the temper he was about to lose. Betty Castle had the bright idea of bringing Art a Dixie cup of water and pouring it into his mouth. Larry Lee, remembering first aid from two years with the Boy Scouts and one as a lifeguard, started to turn Art Sample over and was about to apply artificial respiration, while telling his hysterical wife to shut up, when Malone reached the group.

"Stand back," Malone said. "Once a man is dead, the police protect him right down to his last collar button."

Someone said, "Police?" in a shocked voice.

"Right," Malone said. "I'm calling them right now. Because the murdered man was my client."

Von Flanagan was angry. That, in itself, was nothing new. The big red-faced police officer was angry most of the time, usually at people who were inconsiderate enough to commit murders, for the purpose, he believed, of creating more work for him. He said indignantly, "A guy drops dead in a radio studio and you have to holler for homicide."

"You still don't know what killed him," Malone said. He waved to Joe the Angel for two more beers and hummed a bar of *Goodbye Forever.*

There was an uncomfortable silence until the beers arrived. Joe put them down and said, "It could of happened that way. I knew a fella once —"

"Go away," Malone said unhappily.

After another, and longer silence, von Flanagan snorted indignantly. "Dog whistles!"

Malone pulled himself together, stared at the police officer, and said, "Have you been getting enough rest lately? Taking vitamins?"

"Dog whistles," von Flanagan repeated, ignoring him. "I read about it. You can't hear 'em, I can't hear 'em. Because they're too high up. They sound too high up, I mean. But the dog can hear 'em because he's got a different kind of ear."

The little lawyer nodded. "A sound — so high-pitched — or low-pitched — or something — that it would kill anyone hearing it. It could be possible —"

"With a clarinet, anything is possible," von Flanagan assured him. "My brother-in-law Albert —"

"Another time," Malone said. He scowled. "But why wouldn't everybody hearing it drop dead, not just the clarinet player?"

Von Flanagan didn't answer that one. He finished his beer and said, "But you can't expect me to believe that just because four notes of a song —" He broke off, looked up, and said brightly, "Oh, hello!"

The moonbeam blonde, still pale and frightened, clung to Larry Lee's arm. Malone suspected she'd been crying. If her eyes had been close to

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violet before, fear had deepened them to purple.

Larry Lee dismissed her with "My wife, Lorna," and waved her to a chair. Malone considered punching the band leader in the nose for treating her so casually, then changed his mind. Not only was Larry Lee a potential client, but he was a lot bigger than Malone.

"I thought I'd find you here," Larry Lee said. He signaled to Joe the Angel for replacements.

Malone, having already switched from rye to beer, decided it was time to switch from beer to gin.

"A terrible thing," Larry Lee said.

"About what you expected to happen?" Malone asked.

The orchestra leader shuddered. "I didn't really expect anything. That business with the music—"

"I suspected it was a press-agent gag all along," Malone said. "But to make it really good — why me? You should have had a doctor in the control room instead."

"We couldn't think of one who would—" Larry Lee paused, and said, "Betty Castle said a lawyer would do just as well, and she suggested you."

"Nice of her," Malone murmured. He wondered who was going to pay his fee.

"And of course, nobody had any idea anything—" Larry Lee paused again, lit a cigarette, and went on, "Lorna said that you said something about Art Sample being your client."

Malone glanced briefly at Mrs. Larry Lee. "It was something about the ownership of a song. He was in to see me for a few minutes, but he didn't have time to go into details." He thought Larry Lee looked relieved. He got back to the original subject with, "You just said — 'nobody had any idea.' In other words, *everybody* was in on the gag?"

Larry Lee nodded. "I knew I could trust everybody in the show."

"You should have trusted at least one of them not to drop dead," Malone said.

"Mr. Malone, there *is* such a superstition," Larry Lee said. He crushed out his cigarette and reached for another. "But I simply can't believe that just because we played four notes from Tosti's *Goodbye*—"

"Dog whistles—" von Flanagan began.

Malone kicked him under the table and said quietly, "It's about time somebody found out what actually did kill him."

Von Flanagan rose, gave him what was probably the dirtiest look in a lifetime of dirty looks, and said, "I'll phone and find out if there's been any report yet."

Lorna Lee had been doing things to her hair and make-up. The result would have been good on anyone, but on her it was terrific. She smiled a little shakily at Malone and said, "I suppose you think we're heartless, but Larry believes in carrying on as usual. We'd planned to go to the Pump Room after the show, and we'd love to have you join us—"

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"You couldn't keep me away with an injunction," Malone assured her with his best non-professional smile. If Larry Lee was going to be coy about fees for legal services, at least he was going to have to pay for some very expensive drinks.

Von Flanagan came back from the phone booth, his broad face an ominous scarlet. "He was murdered," he growled, as though the fact were a personal affront. "Poison." He glared at them all and added, "Aconite."

"Well, at least," Malone said, after the long silence that followed, "it wasn't dog whistles. Or a song." He glanced at Larry Lee. "Or an arrangement of a song."

Maggie looked up coldly and disapprovingly as Malone walked into the office. "It's after eleven," she announced. "The landlord has been strolling up and down the hall twirling a padlock. You look as if you had a hangover. And three women have called to make appointments with you."

"I know what time it is," Malone said amiably, "and the hangover can be considered a legal fee well earned. Who are the women?"

"Betty Castle, Nina Shields, and Lorna Lee. Malone, what *did* happen to that musician last night?"

"I lost him as a client," Malone said, "and von Flanagan has him as a problem." He relit his cigar and added, "And we both have him as a headache."

He went on into his private office and considered the advisability of taking an aspirin tablet. No, he decided, the butterflies in his stomach would probably start playing ping-pong with it. He finally settled for an inch and a half of gin from the bottle in the file drawer marked *Confidential.*

It was regrettable, he reflected, that he knew so little about his late client. Only that he had been a nervous, superstitious, and very handsome young man who played the clarinet, had written some songs, according to his story, and was dead.

He was still wondering about him when Betty Castle walked in, sat down in the exact center of the big leather couch, and planted her tiny feet as solidly on the floor as if she were waiting for an earthquake. Malone smiled at her reassuringly and tried to picture her without the glasses, with a different hair-do, and wearing make-up, plus something specially good in the way of a wardrobe. Right now she reminded him of a particularly inconspicuous mouse.

"I'm his widow," she stated, without preliminaries.

Malone caught his breath and said, "Would you say that again?"

"Art Sample's widow." Suddenly she began to cry, not helplessly nor attractively, but like a bad-mannered and furious child. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know what I can do about it now," Malone said. It seemed to him that the conversation was getting a little ahead of him.

"We'd been married almost a year."

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She sniffled and went on. "I didn't mind it being kept a secret. In his job, his being attractive to women was important. You know what I mean."

"If I don't," Malone said, "I can ask the little birds to tell me." He added, "Stop crying."

She blew her nose and obeyed. "Art introduced me to Larry Lee, and that's how I got the press-agent job. I'm good at it, too."

"I bet you are," Malone said, looking at her thoughtfully. "And I bet you were behind his playing that particular clarinet phrase."

"Art was the best clarinet player since —" she paused. "But it wasn't the music that killed him." Tears welled up in her eyes again, and she fumbled inside her purse.

This time Malone said, "My poor, dear girl!" and whipped out one of the clean handkerchiefs he kept for just such emergencies. He wondered if she could afford a lawyer even more than he wondered why she needed one. He crooned reassuringly, "It isn't true that the police automatically suspect the widow first."

"They couldn't suspect me!" Betty Castle said. "And nobody knows we were married. Not even Larry Lee. No, that isn't why I came to see you."

Malone sighed. "Well — ?"

"It's about the money," she said. "From the songs everybody thinks Larry Lee wrote. You see, they aren't Larry Lee's at all. They were Art's."

"You mean your husband wrote them?" Malone asked.

She nodded. "All of them. Words and music. He didn't know they were going to be hits. He got a bang, a kick, that's all, out of hearing the band play them. But when they did make a lot of money, Larry Lee kept stalling, putting off settling with him. That's why Art came to you. To find out how he could prove he'd written them. And now it's too late. Or — is it?"

While Malone was straining for an answer, the door flew open and Larry Lee stormed in. Over his shoulder, Malone could see Maggie's face signaling, "Don't blame me!"

Larry Lee began, "I came right in because —" He saw Betty Castle and paused. Instead of, "What are you doing here?" he said, "Where have you been all day?"

"I've been home," she said. "I went straight home last night, right after the police let us all go. Mother gave me a sleeping pill. It was — terribly upsetting —"

"Me too, I'm pretty upset," Larry Lee said. "The papers aren't giving me the breaks they should. Which is what I pay you for." His eyes softened suddenly, and he said, "I'm sorry. It hasn't been a picnic for any of us."

"I think the man wants you to take the day off, Betty," Malone said.

She shook her head. "I'm all right now." She looked at Larry Lee like a small dog seeing his first bone. Malone wondered if she'd ever looked at Art Sample that way. "I haven't

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even seen the papers. I just stayed home and tried not to think about it."

"Malone," Larry Lee said abruptly, "I want to talk with you —" He glanced at Betty Castle, paused a moment, and said, "Betty might as well hear it, I know I can trust her. It's about the songs."

"Songs, songs?" Malone said innocently.

"He wrote 'em," Larry Lee said. He went on to tell essentially the same story Betty had told a moment before. But he added, "I wanted to work out a settlement with him. Some arrangement that would be fair to both of us. The main thing was — you can't let the public down. They looked on me as a band leader and a singer *and* a songwriter. But by rights, all the money was Art's. Only now, it's too late."

Malone asked quickly, "What kind of money was involved?"

"Enough. Enough to be a motive for murder." Larry Lee looked grim. "The police found out about it, and they want to question me again. That's why I came to you first." He went on, fast, "About your retainer —"

Malone fingered the lone five-dollar bill in his pocket and said magnificently, "We can discuss that later." He rose and reached for his hat. "We can talk the rest over on the way to von Flanagan's office. Remember, I'm your lawyer, and leave everything to me." He smiled and said in a voice that just missed running for office, "Believe me, my boy, you couldn't be in better hands."

Von Flanagan said, "This guy Sample had a married sister somewhere in Iowa, and she wrote him asking for money. He wrote back about all these songs he'd written, and how everybody thinks Larry Lee wrote 'em. Soon as Larry Lee pays off to him, he says, he'll send her some money. Today she hears about him being murdered, and right away she calls us and reads me his letter." He glared at Larry Lee and said, "Well?"

"We can explain everything," Malone said smoothly. He went on, fast, to repeat Larry Lee's explanation, coloring it a little wherever he thought it would help. "Larry Lee was going to pay Art Sample the money, and he'd told him so."

"Yeah," von Flanagan said coldly, "but did Art Sample believe him?" He added, "Do I believe him? Furthermore, Sample was running around with Larry Lee's wife."

The tall band leader's smile was almost a laugh. "She was like a sister to all the boys in the band. It didn't mean a thing."

Von Flanagan muttered something about motives.

"You're forgetting something," Malone said quickly. "Just how was Art Sample poisoned? Aconite acts fast. He didn't eat or drink anything, or even smoke, just before he died." He paused to light a fresh cigar. "As soon as you bright boys find out the answer to that one, let me know.

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Meantime, forget talking about motives, and quit bothering my client."

"I've got enough on him now to hold him," the big police officer growled, but without conviction.

"Do," Malone said pleasantly, "and make yourself the most unpopular man in the world with the millions of fans who listen every week to Larry Lee."

Back in his office, the little lawyer began to feel unhappy about the whole thing. Larry Lee did have a motive, several of them. The matter of the songs. The fragile Lorna Lee, with her moon-colored hair. Malone remembered her frantic whisper as the broadcast had begun.

Worse still, no one else seemed to have a motive.

But there was something else. How had Art Sample been given the poison? Malone closed his eyes and remembered everything that had happened in the studio from the moment the broadcast began to when the police allowed everyone to leave. Suddenly he reached for the phone and called von Flanagan.

"No, and it wasn't on his handkerchief," von Flanagan said, without preliminaries. "We tested it."

Malone said, "The bright boys from your department were going over the general debris on the floor when we left. Would you mind reading me the list of what they found?"

"Yes," von Flanagan said. "But hang on a minute." Malone could hear his voice yelling, "Klutchetsky, come here and —" He put down the phone and called to Maggie to pick up the extension and grab her notebook.

Approximately two and a half minutes later, a polite voice said, "Mr. Malone? Here you are." It droned on. "One hundred and thirty-eight cigarette butts, nineteen marked with lipstick; three pieces of Kleenex; nine pencils; twenty-two marked-up scripts; a lady's handkerchief with the initial 'N'; a copy of last Thursday's *Racing Form*; seven empty cigarette packages; and three sheets of music."

Von Flanagan's voice cut in, "And we've already tested them all. With no results. Including the *Racing Form*."

"Too bad," Malone said. "You might have found another motive." He hung up.

Maggie came in and said, "I got it all down. One hundred and thirty-eight cigarette butts, nineteen —"

"Never mind," Malone said. "Just go away."

He knew now it wasn't something he remembered, but something he'd forgotten.

His unhappiness deepened in intensity. Even looking at Nina Shields, the lovely singer with Larry Lee's band, when she arrived, failed to lighten his mood. He decided that another quickly administered shot of gin would do the trick, and poured one for his client while he was about it.

"Thanks, Malone," she said in the deep, purring voice that made her

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listeners purr right along with her. "What are you going to do about our murder?"

Malone jumped, and said, "*Our?*"

Nina Shields nodded. "I was going to marry the corpse. Of course, I didn't know he was going to be a corpse." She got her drink down in a gulp.

Malone swallowed a gasp as fast as she had swallowed the gin. "Your husband," he began, paused, and said, "I've heard a rumor there's a law against bigamy."

"I've heard of it too," she said quietly. Almost too quietly. "Art was getting hold of some money that was due him. I don't know where from, but it was a lot, he said. We'd fly to Mexico, I'd get a divorce from Jack, and we'd be married right away."

The little lawyer considered telling her that Art might have had to figure in some divorce plans of his own, and decided against it.

"You know Jack," she said. "He's jealous, and he's got a violent temper. But he gets over it fast. As soon as he calmed down, he'd think it over. Chances are, he'd send us a telegram of congratulations."

Malone nodded. He did know the big-time gambler, and he would have bet that Nina was right.

"But now," she said, "now —" She buried her face in her hands.

Malone decided these tears needed personal comforting, and immediately. He sat down on the arm of the couch, put what he considered a strictly fraternal arm around her, whipped out his handkerchief, and began the comforting. He became so engrossed that he failed to notice a commotion in his outer office, and only looked up when his door was suddenly and violently opened.

Jack Shields began with a string of phrases, the most polite of which referred to Malone's immediate ancestry. The little lawyer jumped to his feet. He vaguely heard a few more phrases before he had a definite feeling that the latest thing in bombs had just been exploded inside his mouth.

He blinked himself to consciousness, sitting on the floor. Not only did he have the feeling that most of his teeth were protruding from the back of his neck but, far worse, his dignity had taken a well-nigh fatal blow.

"And what's more," the gambler said, "the same thing goes for your clients." He went on about Art Sample, and obviously no one had ever mentioned to him the impropriety of speaking ill of the dead. "I know he planned to run away with my wife," he said, "but I wasn't going to let him get away with it." He put an arm around Nina. "Let's get out of here, darling."

Lorna Lee was standing in the doorway, her eyes wide. Jack Shields smiled at her in passing and said, "Good afternoon!" as pleasantly as though he'd never knocked down a lawyer in his life.

"He hit you!" Lorna Lee gasped.

Malone nodded and struggled to his feet.

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"Did he hurt you?"

Malone shook his head. After a minute he tried speech, a little experimentally. "My toose ith looth."

Lorna Lee touched his tooth with her tiny, pearly fingers, and said, "Oh dear, it is! You'd better go to a dentist right away."

Malone said, "No sanks." He hoped he didn't sound ungrateful. It wasn't every day he was offered the touch of a comforting hand, especially a hand that reminded him vaguely of a snowflake drifting in a gentle wind.

He allowed himself to be steered to the office couch, and lulled himself into slumber by listening to the voices of Maggie and Lorna Lee arguing over the comparative virtues of ice-packs and hot-water bottles.

What was it he had to remember? He felt close to it now. But sleep was closer.

A cold wet rag slapped him in the face, and Maggie said, "Malone. *Malone.* Wake up!"

"Snowflakes," Malone mumbled, "in an early spring wind." He sat up suddenly and said, "What?"

"Malone, Larry Lee just called. Last night's show has got to be done all over again. This time, for a recording. He's got a new clarinet player, to play what Art Sample played last night. And he wants you to be there." She slapped him again with the wet rag and said, "Same studio, two hours and fifteen minutes from now."

The little lawyer rose shakily to his feet and said, "Phone him I'll be there. And meantime, what is the name of that joint on Wabash Avenue where musicians hang out in their spare time? And phone Joe the Angel for a quick hundred-buck loan." As she headed towards the door, he called out, " — and send down to the drug store for a bottle of toothache drops. All three of these are emergency calls." He called out again, and louder, "But the first one is the important one."

It was halfway through shaving, and waiting for Maggie to return, that he decided to call von Flanagan. Because, he knew now what he had forgotten. . . .

Everything was just as it had been the night before. Again the last spasm of rehearsal was going on. There was one exception — that one of the clarinet players was stocky and red-haired, instead of tall and blond. People were milling around in the studio and in the control room. Jack Shields was there and gave Malone a smile that was completely cordial and completely without apology. Malone measured his height and weight and decided that to forgive was not only divine but, in this case, human. Von Flanagan was standing in a corner trying to look as though he had just strayed in to get out of a rainstorm.

Then the sudden silence, and the red hand of the clock describing its last warning circle.

Once again Malone wished he were anywhere else in the world. Then at last it began — the song of *Goodbye,*

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of heartbreaking eternal goodbye. Malone didn't feel his blood run cold, he felt it turn to something moving as fast as the second-place winner at the Indianapolis race track. He turned to Lorna Lee.

"What did you want to see me about?" he asked her in what he hoped was a whisper.

"The insurance," she whispered back. "Larry Lee had fifty thousand on each of the boys in the band. If it turned out that Larry had murdered him, would he still get the money — and if Larry — I mean, would I —"

Before she could go on, the music swept towards the four notes everyone had been waiting to hear. Malone went on looking at her for a moment. A snowflake. The first pale flower of April, pushing its way upward through the melting snow.

Then the music pulled his gaze into the studio. He didn't like what was going to happen, what he was going to have to do.

Four notes — so carefully hidden in the skillfully designed orchestration that no one would know, until — "*Goodbye — forever —*"

The red-haired, stocky clarinet player dropped his instrument as though it had bitten him. Then he slumped to the floor like an expiring toy balloon.

Once more, everything stopped.

This time it was von Flanagan who moved first. He said, "So that's how it was done. Aconite on the reed of his clarinet."

"No," Malone said quickly, "that wasn't how it was done. Right now, stay put, and don't talk." He grabbed von Flanagan's arm and said, "If the guy is dead, hang me. But this is the only way I could prove what happened."

Again there was the sudden rush of people towards the fallen clarinet player. Jack Shields, who had shoved his way into the studio, threw a protective arm around his wife and demanded loudly that someone call the inhalator squad. Betty Castle ran forward, then paused, her homely little face dazed and bewildered. Lorna Lee burst into tears. Someone called for water. There didn't seem to be any water available, unless someone took the time to drill a well. Larry Lee moved in, the first-aid look back in his eyes.

Malone nodded to von Flanagan, and walked into the studio. He laid one hand on Larry Lee's arm and said, "Sorry your recording was spoiled. But you'll probably get a better performance next time, when everyone isn't worried about who is the murderer." He took a few steps more and said, "All right, Buck, you can get up now. It was a magnificent performance."

If anyone had dropped a pin while the red-haired clarinet player rose to his feet, it would have smashed every seismograph on Mars.

"If you'd been really smart," Malone said, "you'd have carried an extra Dixie cup to drop on the floor, to account for the one you carried away with you — the one you had to carry

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away with you because it had traces of aconite."

He paused for a moment. He was really tired now.

"You knew that with Art Sample dead, Larry Lee would just quietly keep the royalties from the songs," the little lawyer went on relentlessly. "You wanted the money — and Larry Lee. You were confident that Larry Lee would get a divorce and marry you. You knew that in a pinch you could blackmail him because of the songs."

He hated to go on, but he had to. He avoided looking at Larry Lee, and wished that Lorna Lee were deaf.

"You knew that he'd grown sick of beautiful faces the way a man can get sick of chocolate éclairs."

Betty Castle had been like solid stone, now she exploded in a flaming rage, aimed at Lorna Lee. Malone caught a few words, the kindest of which was "tramp," and the most definite "— all the boys in the band." Lorna Lee exploded right back at her, and the words Malone caught from her surprised even him. Snowflake, he thought. Spring flower. He said, "Shut up, both of you."

Von Flanagan had come into the studio. He said, "But — *Goodbye Forever* —" He stopped just short of adding, "Dog whistles."

"It worked in perfectly," Malone told him. "She killed him *after* he was supposed to be dead. Isn't that right, Betty?"

She smiled at him wanly. "It was a good try, anyway." She looked at Larry Lee and her eyes said, "I'm sorry for everything." She looked at Lorna Lee and her lips moved silently around a very unpleasant word. Then she walked over to von Flanagan without a tremor.

Malone rushed over to her and said, "Don't forget, I'm your lawyer. Let me do the talking for you. Don't say a word, and don't sign anything." He patted her on the shoulder. "Remember, my dear, you couldn't be in better hands."

"But how did you know?" von Flanagan said, hours later.

"Because there wasn't a clue," Malone said. He waved at Joe the Angel for two more beers. "I had the motive — in fact, I had a motive for everybody. When I slipped that red-haired clarinet player a hundred bucks to pull a phony faint, I was slipping a slug in a slot machine, as far as I knew." He reached in his pocket to finger the retainer check Larry Lee had given him.

"It paid off," von Flanagan said wearily.

"She knew he was nervous, she knew he was superstitious," Malone went on. "She talked Larry Lee into pulling this stunt as a press-agent gag, and made sure everybody in the band, or connected with it, knew all about it. Then she worked Art Sample into such a state that he was bound to collapse in the studio."

He relit his cigar and said, "He fainted — she counted on that. Someone rushing up with a Dixie cup of

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water was the instinctive thing no one would even notice. *But there wasn't an empty Dixie cup among the odds and ends your boys picked up from the floor!*"

Malone buried his face in his hands for a moment. He was seeing Betty Castle's straight little back when she'd walked over to the police officer and said, "Okay."

"Don't worry," von Flanagan said. "After all, she's got a good lawyer."

But Malone was thinking of something else. He was seeing Art Sample again, his handsome young face as he reached for that one high note on the clarinet, and he was hearing a melody.

"It never pays to be a ghost," Malone said. He stared into the circle left by his upraised glass. "To ghost anything. You're dead before you can even start."

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Allan Vaughan Elston grew up on his father's ranch near the Colorado-New Mexico line, where fences were built not to keep stock in but to keep cattle out . . . where alfalfa meadows stretched for miles along the creek in a narrow, purple ribbon . . . where land without waterholes wasn't worth paying taxes on . . . where antelope were plentiful and the rincon of a timbered mesa was full of deer and bear and wild turkey . . . where at the age of ten Elston could own a paint pony and ride up the canyons to catch trout . . . where ranches of those days were like autonomous villages, including rambling adobe houses, barns, bunkshacks, stores, school, church, and where the children of the help were born, educated, married, employed for life, and eventually buried without ever having left the ranch land . . . where the men of the sage and mesquite habitually wore six-guns and where the Three R's stood for riding, roping, and roaring . . . where picnics for the youngsters meant going out to the blind canyons to trap and tame bands of wild horses and where you could trek for weeks through the border counties, through vast wildernesses and false-fronted cowtowns . . .

From these deep-rooted beginnings how was it possible for Allan Vaughan Elston to write a story like "Eva? Caroline?" Well, Mr. Elston left the ranch of his father (although he has gone back from time to time), went to college, became an engineer, gave up surveying railroads for a career of writing, and now plots stories from the logical, mathematical viewpoint of his later professional, rather than his earlier environmental, background. But the plots are not cold logic, absolute mathematics: they are about people, and that quality stems, however changed, however transmuted, from Mr. Elston's boyhood and young manhood on the old ranch, where the sea of bunch grass heaved in the sun and the lordly herds lowed down in the wind . . .

EVA? CAROLINE?

by ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

"THAT," ROGER MARSH ASSERTED with a strained effort to speak calmly, "is absurd and impossible. My wife died almost four years ago."

Inspector Whipple, who had just arrived in Baltimore to interview Roger Marsh, gave the photograph a puzzled stare. It was the picture of a

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woman, one which he had taken himself only day before yesterday in Seattle. "Then this," he said, "can't be your wife."

Roger tried hard to control himself. "Of course not," he said stiffly.

"You admit it looks like her?"

"I admit it does. If you'd shown it to me four years ago I might have sworn it was Caroline. But since you took it only this week, it *has* to be someone else."

They were in the drawing room of the old Marsh house. Five generations of Marshes had lived here amid high-ceilinged elegance, the gentlest and richest of the old Maryland culture.

And Roger Marsh, severely handsome at thirty-three, looked part of it. A portrait of his great-grandfather over the mantel had the same narrow granite face, the uncompromising gaze of a man who doesn't believe in change. Apparent too was a long-bred restraint which would be instantly revolted by anything sensational.

Inspector Whipple studied the man sitting opposite him; then he said, "Who, Mr. Marsh, was with your wife when she died?"

Roger reminded himself that this police officer was his guest for the moment and must be treated as such. When he spoke, it was with a carefully disciplined patience. "I was. So was our family doctor. So was a nurse at a local hospital."

"Tell me the how, when and where of it, Mr. Marsh. You'd been married how long?"

"I was married eight years ago," Roger told him. "Seven years ago I went into the army. Judge Advocate's department, foreign service. In London, three years later, I received a cablegram from Dr. Cawfield, our family physician, saying my wife had pneumonia. So I got an emergency leave and flew home."

"Was she still living when you arrived?"

"Yes, but failing fast. She lingered on for six more days."

"Did she have a twin sister? An identical twin?"

"She did not," Roger said. "What are you suggesting, Inspector?"

"You're quite certain the woman who died was your wife?"

With a stern effort Roger controlled his irritation. "Are you implying I didn't know my own wife? I tell you I was there at her bedside. So was Dr. Cawfield. During those last six days she was occasionally able to talk and receive visitors. Many of her closest friends called to see her."

"Was her casket open at the funeral? Did lots of people who knew her well see her then?"

"Scores of them," Roger said, his face flushed.

"The woman in Seattle," Whipple explained, "is known to the police as Eva Lang. She's a confidence woman and five years ago she killed a man in Detroit. The crime was witnessed. Police had a good description of her but no fingerprints. A week ago we raided a farm near Walla Walla, Washington, where four wanted men

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were hiding out. Three of them were killed in the fight; the fourth escaped. But we picked up a woman living with them who was identified as Eva Lang. Her defense is: 'I'm not Eva Lang; I'm Mrs. Roger Marsh.' "

Roger reclaimed the photograph and gave it a long bitter stare. "This woman just happens to look like Caroline. So now she's using that fact to save her life."

"She gave us a list of twenty-eight people in Baltimore who, she claims, will verify that she's Caroline Marsh," Inspector Whipple said. He handed Roger a list of names.

Roger saw that his own name headed it. Next came Dr. Cawfield; Effie Foster, who had been Caroline's most intimate friend, was third. Others on the list were neighbors, clubwomen, friends.

"This is the most ridiculous hoax I ever heard of," Roger said. "These same people were at her funeral."

Whipple nodded in sympathy. "No doubt you're right. But it's something we have to straighten out. Did your wife have any distinguishing scars?"

Roger concentrated. "Only one," he said. "Just after we were married, she burned the third knuckle of her right hand with a hot iron. It left a small star-shaped white scar."

The statement startled Whipple. "Our prisoner in Seattle," he said, "also has a burn scar on the third knuckle of her right hand."

Roger closed his eyes for a moment. This can't be happening, he thought. His mind clung stubbornly to the one certain fact: Caroline's death four years ago. "If Caroline had had a twin sister," he snapped, "she would have told me. I don't want to be brusque, Inspector, but I have no desire to be dragged into this."

"The trouble is, you're already in," Whipple argued amiably. "It's like this: the Detroit police want to try Eva Lang for that murder she committed five years ago. But when she claimed she's your wife and named twenty-eight witnesses to prove it, Detroit got worried. If she really is the wife of a wealthy Maryland lawyer, extraditing her as Eva Lang might get them in hot water. So they tell us to disprove the Marsh angle first, then they'll take her to Detroit for trial. That's why I came here to Baltimore. I want to take the top three persons named on the list back with me to Seattle. They can look at her, talk to her and say whether she's your wife."

"You want to take me, Dr. Cawfield and Effie Foster clear across the continent just to say a living impostor isn't a woman who died four years ago? I won't do it. Talk to Dr. Cawfield while you're here and with nurses at the hospital and the mortician if you want to; then go back to Seattle and tell Eva Lang to retract her ridiculous statement."

Whipple smiled tolerantly. "I don't blame you for wanting to avoid publicity. But you're heading right into it. Because ultimately she'll go on trial for murder and her defense will be that she's your wife. You yourself

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will be subpoenaed as a witness to identify her. It'll be a field day for the papers. So why not silence her at once, in the privacy of the Seattle jail? Think it over, Mr. Marsh."

Reluctantly Roger realized the inspector was right. "Very well," he agreed. "I'll go. She may look like Caroline, but she isn't. I can trip her up with questions. Small details that no one but Caroline could know."

Whipple gave a shrewd nod. "That's the idea. And now about taking along Dr. Cawfield and some close woman friend. We want to keep this hush-hush if we can. So why not call them up and ask them to come over?"

An hour later Inspector Whipple sat facing an audience of three. Dr. Elias Cawfield, gray, oldish, testy, was taking Whipple's questions as an insult to his professional integrity. "I issued that death certificate myself," he blazed at Whipple. "I'll have you know, sir, that —"

Effie Foster, a plump blonde of Roger's age, put a hand over the doctor's lips. "Now let's not get excited," she soothed. "That woman's just trying to put one over and of course we won't let her get away with it."

"Does she presume to give any details as to how she's been spending the last four years?" Roger asked the inspector.

"Plenty of them," Whipple said. "Personally, I don't believe her, not for a minute. I think she's Eva Lang, a career adventuress guilty of murder and trying to avoid the penalty by claiming another identity."

"If she gave details," Roger said, "let's hear them."

"She claims that you, her husband, went off to war seven years ago, leaving her in this house with a couple of servants. But as the war went on and the housing and manpower shortages grew, she turned over the lower floor to a society of ladies who made bandages for veterans, laid off the servants and occupied the second floor alone."

Roger, Effie and Dr. Cawfield exchanged glances. "That's exactly what Caroline did!" Effie exclaimed.

Roger nodded. "Yes, she wrote me about it. For the last year of her life she lived upstairs alone. Everybody knows that. So what?"

Whipple resumed: "She says that one night she answered a knock at the door and her own image walked in. The image said, 'You're Caroline, I suppose. I'm Evelyn Blythe.'"

Again Roger nodded. "My wife's maiden name was Blythe. But she never mentioned an Evelyn."

"What members of the Blythe family did you know?" Whipple asked.

"None but Caroline herself. She was twenty-three when I met her, and a salesgirl in a New York department store. When I got to know her better she told me her mother had died when she was fourteen, that she'd been making her own living ever since and that she couldn't remember her father at all. She said her mother would never talk about her father. She knew of no living relatives."

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"Bear in mind, what I'm telling you is Eva Lang's story, not mine," Whipple cautioned. "It goes on like this: Evelyn told Caroline that they were identical twins; that their father and mother had separated when they were small children, each taking a twin. The father took Evelyn, the mother Caroline. But the father had a photograph of his wife. At his death Evelyn acquired it. She showed it to Caroline and Caroline definitely recognized her own mother. That, plus the testimony of a mirror, convinced Caroline that they were twin sisters. Eva Lang says now, 'I'd always hungered for a blood relative; so I, Caroline Blythe Marsh, took Evelyn to my heart.' "

Roger listened, tense and incredulous. Dr. Cawfield snorted: "It's preposterous!"

"I can accept the fact of twins," Whipple asserted, "because you all admit that this photograph looks like Caroline. But I don't believe that Eva Lang is Caroline. For my money, she's Evelyn."

Roger protested, "It won't stand up, Inspector. Even if we concede that Caroline could have had a twin sister without knowing it, it still won't stand up. Because my wife would have presented this sister to her friends. She would have written me all about it."

"According to Eva Lang," Whipple countered, "that was her first and natural impulse. But Evelyn begged her not to. She said she was in trouble. Some men were looking for her and she mustn't let them find her. If Evelyn could just hide here till the men hunting for her gave up and left town —"

The pain on Roger's face stopped Whipple. Cawfield and Effie Foster were hardly less shocked. Again Whipple reminded them, "It's Eva Lang's story, not mine."

"Go on," Roger said.

"It took a lot of pleading by Evelyn. But Caroline, naturally sympathetic and warmhearted, finally agreed to let her stay in hiding. Evelyn said a few weeks would be long enough; then everything would be safe and she would go away. Actually Evelyn stayed at least two months. She wore Caroline's clothes and fixed her hair like Caroline's. That's why you, Mrs. Foster, were fooled when you popped in unannounced on a day Caroline was out shopping and you chatted ten minutes with Evelyn, thinking she was Caroline."

"I?" Effie exclaimed. "Of course I didn't. I'd have known she wasn't Caroline."

"You were rounding up some old clothes," Whipple suggested, "for a rummage sale. Eva Lang says Evelyn told her about it when she got home. Evelyn was afraid to turn you down. So she took a few outmoded things from Caroline's closet and gave them to you. You remember the incident, Mrs. Foster?"

"I did come here," Effie admitted, "and Caroline gave me a bundle of clothes. But it was Caroline herself."

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"Take a look at this." Whipple produced a latchkey from his pocket. "We found it in Eva Lang's purse. See if it fits the front door."

Roger took the key to the door and tried it in the lock. The key was a perfect fit.

"If you showed me a hundred keys," he muttered, "you still couldn't convince me."

"I'm not trying to convince you, Mr. Marsh. I'm just showing you what you're up against with this Lang woman. It's pretty clear the real story is this: After two or three months here, Evelyn made good on her promise and slipped away. No doubt she'd just been hiding out so the police wouldn't grab her for the Detroit murder. When things cooled off she drifted back to the underworld she came from. Then she read in the papers about Caroline's death and got an idea for defense if she was ever picked up. She'd swear she was Caroline and that it was Evelyn who had died in Baltimore. Preparing for it, she took a hot iron and burned the third knuckle of her right hand. But that, of course, isn't the way Eva Lang tells it."

"How does Eva Lang tell it?" Roger asked.

"She claims that she, Caroline, was wakened one night by coughing. Evelyn had caught a bad cold. So Caroline walked two blocks to a drugstore to get a cough remedy for Evelyn. On the way home two toughies stopped her. 'So it's little Eva,' they said. 'We been lookin' all over for you, Eva. We can't risk lettin' cops pick you up. They'd put on the heat and you might talk. So we're takin' you home.' The next thing she knew she was riding in a closed car."

"And she didn't call out to the first passer-by?" Dr. Cawfield scoffed.

"She says she was taped up, hands, feet and mouth. The men drove only by night. A week of nights took them to an isolated farm in the State of Washington. Two other men were there, one of them a forger named Duke Smedley. He'd been Evelyn's sweetheart. He walked up to her and took her in his arms. 'Hello, Eva,' he said and kissed her. She slapped him, crying, 'I'm not Eva.' He looked more closely at her. 'Damn it, you're not Eva,' he said. He turned in fury on the two men. 'You stupid fools got the wrong girl.'

"Three of them still thought she was Eva; only Duke Smedley was sure she wasn't. But they had her. They didn't set her free. It meant their necks if they did. So they held her."

"For four years?" Cawfield said derisively.

"The woman says they didn't mean to. Three of them wanted to kill her right away. But Duke Smedley wouldn't let 'em because she looked so much like Eva. Pretty soon they saw the notice of Mrs. Marsh's death in the Baltimore papers. Smedley got the Baltimore papers to see if Caroline's disappearance would be discovered. His argument then was:

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'We don't need to do away with her; she's dead already. Nobody's looking for her.' Too, there was the idea of holding her as a hostage, an ace in the hole if it ever came to a showdown with the police. So the stalemate dragged on, month after month."

"I don't believe it," Roger said.

"Nor I. The police theory is that Eva Lang went there of her own free will and was part of the mob."

Roger rose and crossed the room to stand before the portrait of his great-grandfather. His face, more than ever like pale granite, was brooding and bitter. Nothing like this had ever before happened to the Marshes.

"She ought to know that she hasn't a chance in the world to put this over."

"I think she does know it," Whipple agreed. "I don't think she has the least idea of being accepted and taken back into your home. But she can get an acquittal if just one juror out of twelve feels a reasonable doubt. Eleven can be as sure as you are that she's an impostor. But if only one juror thinks, well, maybe she *is* Mrs. Marsh, that would be enough. And that, I figure, is all she wants."

"The devil it is!" Dr. Cawfield growled. "She'll be after money too, once she's free. She'll pester Roger, parading as his poor disowned wife, till he makes a settlement."

"Cheer up," Effie Foster urged breezily. "It's a headache, of course, but it mustn't get us down. We'll go to Seattle and ask her questions. 'If you're Caroline, what did I give you for your birthday five years ago?'"

Dr. Cawfield turned to Roger. "Hadn't we better take along your aunt and uncle?"

Roger considered for a moment; then shook his head. His Uncle Carey was a fire-eater; he'd want to sue the Seattle police. Aunt Harriet was just the opposite. She was a gullible sentimentalist. Show her an underdog, like Eva Lang, and she'd want to start petting it right away. "No, Doctor. Just the three of us. I'll charter a plane. We'll meet at the airport in the morning."

By the time the plane was flying westward Roger Marsh had made a concession. Although the Marsh in him erected an iron wall against any part of Eva Lang's claim, the lawyer in him couldn't deny certain glaring bits of evidence. Evelyn Blythe, alias Eva Lang, was not his wife but she *was* his sister-in-law. His unspeakably criminal sister-in-law. And she *had* spent two months visiting his wife.

Yes, he thought, reviewing Eva Lang's story once more as he looked out the window of the plane, that much he would concede, but no more. Then he remembered something and beckoned to Inspector Whipple.

"I've just thought of something," Roger said when the inspector sat down beside him. "Caroline kept a diary. She made entries every night — all sorts of personal details."

"Well, what about it?"

"After the funeral four years ago,

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I happened to think of the diary. It was something too intimate to be left lying around loose in the house. But I couldn't find it. I looked everywhere — it was gone. So I concluded that Caroline had destroyed it herself."

Whipple nodded. "I see. And now you're afraid Evelyn took it?"

"It's possible," Roger brooded.

"If Eva Lang took it," Whipple admitted, "she's had four years to memorize everything in it. She can answer questions like a fox."

"You said four men were at the farm with her. Three were killed in the raid and one escaped. Which one?"

"Duke Smedley. Smoothest confidence man in the business. The police are after him, coast to coast, on a dozen counts."

"He was Eva Lang's sweetheart?"

"So our prisoner says. But when he knew she wasn't Eva he gave her a break because she was Eva's sister. It's more logical to assume she was and is Duke Smedley's girl, and that she went back of her own free will to join him at the farm."

Roger stoked a pipe nervously. "The point is, Inspector, he's alive. He may be picked up. And he knows the truth about Eva Lang."

"He'll be picked up, all right. He has a police record. Here's his picture."

Whipple opened his suitcase and brought out a photograph. It showed a man of exceptional good looks, well dressed and with an air of sophistication.

"He's the tops in his racket," Whipple said. "One time he — but what's the matter, Mr. Marsh?" Roger was staring with a strange intensity at the photograph.

"I've a feeling," Roger murmured, "that I've seen this man before. I can't remember when or where. But I'm sure I've seen him."

"Then maybe this goes deeper than we think, Mr. Marsh. Maybe he's back of the whole thing."

"It's hardly possible," Roger said. "I've a feeling it was years ago when I saw him. Perhaps while I was in the army. He couldn't have schemed this far ahead."

"Well, keep the picture," Whipple insisted. "We have other copies. Look at it every once in a while. Maybe you'll remember where you saw him."

A morning later Inspector Whipple led Effie Foster, Dr. Cawfield and Roger Marsh into a reception room at the Seattle jail. Roger stood stiffly, preparing himself for the ordeal of disowning this woman.

A police matron came in. Quietly she reported, "I've just brought her to the inspection room. Are these the identifiers?"

Whipple nodded. Then he saw the dread on Roger's face and suggested, "Would you rather see her first without her seeing you, Mr. Marsh? You may if you like. Later, of course, you'll have to talk with her for a voice test."

"We'd like to see her first," Roger said.

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"Then step this way." Whipple led him to a far wall of the room and stood him in front of a closed panel. When he opened the panel a circular glass pane was exposed. It was about the size of a porthole in a ship's cabin. Through it Roger could see clearly into the room beyond.

Seated in the center of that room, under a bright light, was the prisoner Eva Lang. She was in half profile to Roger. Instantly he felt a surge of relief. For the seated woman didn't look nearly so much like Caroline as he had expected. She seemed much older. There were streaks of gray in her hair. Roger remembered the velvety smoothness of Caroline's skin. The face of this woman was hard. Nothing of Caroline's sweet gentle character was etched there. Instead of Caroline's calm complacent gaze, Roger saw a tense bitter defiance. The eyes were brown, like Caroline's, and the hair was center-parted and fluffed at the sides, like Caroline's. Evidently a hairdresser had worked on Eva Lang in her cell, doing everything possible to make her resemble Caroline. The contours of her face were indeed quite like Caroline's and Roger could understand instantly why a photograph would be more convincing than the woman herself. The photograph didn't show color; it showed only shape and lines.

Roger stared long and intently through the glass. Then he closed the panel and stepped back to Inspector Whipple. "Before God," he said, "I never saw that woman before."

"Your turn, Dr. Cawfield."

The doctor went to the panel, opened, peered through it. In a moment he turned back with a snort. "Just as I thought! A masquerade!"

"Your turn, Mrs. Foster."

Effie Foster took more time than had either of the men. When she closed the panel her face had a clouded disturbed look. "She's not Caroline, of course. But she *does* look like her in a sort of jaded way."

The police matron surprised them by speaking up. "Wouldn't you look rather jaded yourself, Mrs. Foster, if you'd been slave and prisoner for four years to a gang of crooks?"

Effie flushed. Inspector Whipple cut in quickly, "Well, we'll talk to her, Mrs. Kelly. Right now. That will be more conclusive."

Whipple led them through a door into the presence of the woman known as Eva Lang.

Roger Marsh breathed deeply in an attempt to slow his pounding heart. This was the moment he'd been dreading.

She stood up as they entered, stared for a moment at Roger, her lips parted and her face lighting up. Then she came toward him, eager, confident, her hands outstretched. "Roger! I thought you'd never come!"

The uncompromising granite of Roger's face stopped her. "You're not at all convincing, Miss Lang," he said stiffly.

The shock on her face was as though he'd struck her. "You don't know me, Roger?"

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"No," he said. "I do not. You'd know me, of course, if you were Caroline's guest for two months, because there were pictures of me all over the house."

Her dazed eyes stared at him a moment longer, then turned to Effie Foster. Then to Dr. Cawfield.

Effie didn't speak. Dr. Cawfield's stony face was answer enough.

Her eyes went back to Roger. "You mean you're disowning me, Roger?"

"Hasn't this gone far enough, Miss Lang?" he parried.

For a moment he thought she'd burst into tears. Instead the hardness and defiance came back to her face. "What a fool I've been!" she said bitterly. "To think you'd come and take me home! I might have known you wouldn't! You and your stiff Maryland pride!" She laughed hysterically. "It's so much easier to say you never knew me. Will you take me back to my cell, Inspector? They've seen the rogues' gallery. They've said, yes, she's the rogue, not the wife."

Inspector Whipple said crisply, "First, Miss Lang, I've a few questions. Please sit down."

She sat down stiffly, facing Whipple, ignoring the others.

It had been agreed that Whipple would ask the questions because, as a police officer, he could do so with more authority. Effie had given him a list.

"What," Whipple asked, "did Effie Foster give Caroline Marsh for a birthday present five years ago?"

"I don't remember."

Effie smiled. "You see?" she challenged.

"Effie," the accused woman retorted, "won a bridge prize at my house six years ago. What was it?"

Effie gaped. "I've forgotten," she admitted.

"You see?" The woman's smile mocked her. "That, I suppose, proves she isn't Effie Foster. Go on, Inspector."

Whipple read from his list: "Roger Marsh has an aunt and uncle. What are their names, where do they live and what is their telephone number?"

"Uncle Carey and Aunt Harriet," the prisoner answered promptly, "live in Edgeton. I've forgotten their phone number."

"Roger and Caroline Marsh were in an amateur play one time. What was the play and what parts did they take?"

"It was William Tell. Roger was William Tell and I was his son, with an apple on my head. Ask me something hard, Inspector."

"Who was the chairman of the Community Chest committee Caroline Marsh once served on?"

"I can't remember."

Her voice, Roger thought, was a little like Caroline's but definitely bolder. Caroline had been a timid quiet girl. This woman was a fighter.

"When Dr. Cawfield was on vacation, who was the doctor who substituted for him?"

"The name slips my mind, Inspector. Perhaps if I think awhile, I'll remember."

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Caroline, Roger was sure, would remember instantly. Young and good-looking Dr. Joyce had in fact treated that burn on the third knuckle of Caroline's hand. This woman, he saw, had a burn scar in the same place. She must have inflicted it deliberately.

"Caroline and Roger Marsh had one serious quarrel during the first year of their married life. What caused it?"

"As if I could forget!" The woman smiled bitterly. "Roger had a too beautiful secretary named Lucile Dutton. I thought he admired her more than he should. One day he went to Annapolis for a trial. He forgot his briefcase. Lucile carried it to him and he took her to lunch. People saw them and told me. I shouldn't have been jealous but I was. And one word led to another."

Whipple looked at Roger and Roger, with a grimace, nodded. "I suppose it was all in Caroline's diary," he murmured.

"Did Roger ever take Caroline to Honolulu?"

"Yes."

"What hotel did they stop at?"

"I can't remember. It's been eight years."

"What was the occasion?"

"Our honeymoon."

"How long had Roger been married when he went into the army?"

"About a year."

"That was seven years ago. How many times did Caroline see him after that?"

"Not once — until now. Perhaps that's why he doesn't know me."

"Who introduced Roger to Caroline?"

"No one. He went into a New York store to buy a bottle of perfume. I was the clerk who sold it to him. That's how we met."

All that, Roger kept assuring himself, could have been in Caroline's diary. Or Caroline could have confided it during Evelyn's visit. Undoubtedly this was Evelyn Blythe.

There were many more questions. To about half of them the woman answered frankly, "I can't remember." But certainly she had briefed herself on Caroline's past with a studied thoroughness. The romantic incidents in it were the ones she knew best. The very ones which Caroline, always a romanticist, would have been most likely to confide.

In the end Whipple turned to Roger. "You still say this woman isn't your wife?"

"I do," Roger said.

Dr. Cawfield echoed him emphatically. "Caroline Marsh died four years ago."

Whipple pressed a button and the police matron came in. "We're finished," he said.

The prisoner followed Matron Kelly to an exit. Then she turned defiantly to Roger Marsh. "You've asked me a great many questions, Roger. Now let me ask you one. Did you ever read Matthew 19:5?"

Without waiting for a response she disappeared with the matron.

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"The devil," Dr. Cawfield derided, "can cite Scripture for his purpose. Let's get out of here."

As they went out Whipple said, "Pretty sharp, wasn't she? Well, now that that's over, the Detroit police will extradite her for trial in Michigan. I'll be glad to get rid of her. Where to now, Mr. Marsh?"

"To a hotel," Roger said, "for a night's sleep. Then to Baltimore."

With Effie Foster and the doctor he taxied to a hotel. In his room there Roger saw a Gideon Bible on the dresser. He picked it up and turned to Matthew 19:5.

The verse read: "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh."

When Roger's chartered plane glided to a landing at the Baltimore airport, he saw that the gateway was swarming with reporters.

"And look, Roger," Effie exclaimed, "isn't that your Uncle Carey and Aunt Harriet?"

"It's the whole town," Roger groaned. "Blast them! Why can't they leave us alone?"

Roger fought fiercely through people who waylaid them in the gateway, refusing to answer the questions hurled at him by newsmen. He let Effie and Dr. Cawfield deal with them. He himself broke away, flanked by his uncle and aunt. Reporters, Uncle Carey was complaining, had awakened him at five o'clock this morning.

"And what," he demanded furiously, "are you going to do about it?" He was short and bald. His wife, Harriet, was tall and gray.

"Nothing," Roger said.

"You mean you'll let them drag the name of Marsh through —"

"Oh, fiddlesticks!" Aunt Harriet broke in. "That's all I've heard for forty years. The proud unsullied name of Marsh! For a century you've kept it out of headlines. And now you're in them up to your necks." Her eyes glittered.

"Harriet," Uncle Carey rebuked bleakly, "must you be flippant at a time like this? Don't you realize what it means? We're disgraced, all of us. Now look, Roger, I've thought it over. We'll all make a tour of South America till this horrible mess is over. That way they can't drag us in at the trial."

"You can run if you want to," Roger said. "I shan't."

Just as they reached Uncle Carey's car, Leslie Paxton, Roger's law partner, caught up with them. "Roger," he demanded, "why didn't you tell me about this? Think of the firm! Have you seen the latest editions?" He had a packet of them under his arm.

Uncle Carey herded them into his sedan and took the wheel himself.

"No," Roger said. "What about them?"

As the car sped away, Uncle Carey trying desperately to elude reporters, Leslie Paxton gave Roger the latest journalistic flashes.

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"They've traced the background of Jake Lang, alias Jake Blythe. He was a cardsharp who died at Joliet. He came originally from Arizona. A record in an old mine hospital proves that twin girls were born to Jake's wife about thirty years ago. The twins were named Evelyn and Caroline. So that much of it can't be denied."

"I've already conceded that much," Roger told him. "Eva Lang is my sister-in-law. We have to start from there."

"They've taken her to Detroit," Paxton said, "for trial. Don't you see what you're up against? You can't ignore it."

"I don't intend to ignore it, Leslie. That's why I want you to go to Detroit."

"Me? Why me?"

"Because you're a lawyer and my partner. Please tell Eva Lang that you represent me. Tell her that as her brother-in-law, I offer to employ the most competent counsel in Detroit for her defense. Make it clear that I do this not as her husband, but as her brother-in-law."

"If she's a criminal," Paxton protested, "why back her at all?"

"Criminal or not, she's Caroline's sister. Caroline would want me to do it."

Uncle Carey protested loudly. But Aunt Harriet applauded. "That's the most human thing I ever heard a Marsh say. Bravo, Roger."

Leslie Paxton reluctantly agreed. He promised to catch a night train for Detroit.

The car was passing a pair of tall granite pillars with a grilled gate between them. Roger asked Uncle Carey to stop.

"Let me out here, please. I'll take a taxi home."

They knew what he wanted. Uncle Carey let him out and the car drove on. Roger passed through the gateway and took a gravel path through a grove of stately elms. This was St. Cecelia Cemetery. He went directly to the Marsh family plot.

Hat in hand, Roger stood beside the newest grave. On its headstone was inscribed:

Caroline Blythe Marsh, 1917—1944

Here was a fact, Roger thought. Something to cling to. Here was the one and final answer to Eva Lang. It brought back, vividly, all the incontestable realities. Caroline's last illness, the six days he had sat by her bedside. He remembered her last whispered word, "Good-by, Roger." With her small hand in his, her eyes had closed in death.

No fantastic masquerade could possibly gainsay that fact — Caroline's death four years ago. It steadied him now, as he stood by her grave. Confusion, and sometimes whispers of doubt, had taken their toll. There'd been moments when he'd wondered if he was mistaken; brief torturing suspicions that he might be denying his own wife.

All that was brushed away now as he stood by Caroline's grave. Dozens of people had seen her lowered here.

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They'd mourned by her open casket. Every one of them was an unbreachable defense against Eva Lang.

For two days Roger dodged reporters and waited morosely for Leslie Paxton's return from Detroit. Paxton dropped in on him late the second evening. "I've seen Eva Lang, Roger. She turned down your offer. What an actress that woman is! She's a scuffed-up imitation of Caroline, but she's not Caroline."

"Just what did she say?"

"If you want her exact words, she said, 'Tell Roger I'll accept from him the loyalty of a husband; nothing more; nothing less.' "

Paxton left a few minutes later. Roger saw him to the door, then went up to his bedroom. As he took off his tie and loosened his collar, he studied the picture of Caroline on his chiffonobe. Innocence and pride shone in the loving gaze of her eyes. He thought of Eva Lang's response to Leslie. It was a response that didn't fit Eva Lang. It seemed more the attitude of innocence and hurt pride.

Lucile Dutton, Roger's secretary, was alone in the office when Roger appeared the next morning. With her "Good morning, Mr. Marsh," she flashed him a quick look of sympathy.

"Good morning, Lucille." Roger considered her troubled eyes for a moment, then consulted her about the problem that had kept him from sleep the night before. She warmly reassured him. "Don't let her fool you, Mr. Marsh. Turning down your offer just shows she's smart. She knew you'd react just that way."

"But she hasn't a cent. And good attorneys come high."

"It'll be worth more, she thinks, to soften you up. And to win public sympathy. The deserted-wife act is her best bet."

Roger sat down at his desk and took from his pocket the photograph of Duke Smedley given him by Whipple. He showed it to Lucile Dutton. "Was this man ever in the office? Did we ever have any contact with him?"

"I don't recognize him," the girl said. "Who is he?"

"He's Eva Lang's boy friend. I've a vague feeling I saw him one time. Keep an eye open for him, Lucile."

Later in the day a deputy from the district attorney's office of Detroit called on Roger. He served a summons which required Roger Marsh to testify in the case of the People Against Eva Lang. Roger had been expecting it.

"I'm serving a similar summons," the deputy said, "on a dozen or more persons who knew your wife well."

"How will you select them?"

"We're interviewing all the twenty-eight people named by the accused and will select ten or more who are positive she isn't your wife."

"What tests have you made on Eva Lang?" Roger asked.

"A blood test and a handwriting test. Her blood type is the same as your wife's, but that would be ex-

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pected with twin sisters. Her handwriting very closely resembles your wife's. But Eva Lang had four years to practice her sister's handwriting under the coaching of an expert forger, Duke Smedley."

"You think he's in on this with her?"

"It fits him like a glove. We think their first objective is an acquittal on the murder charge. Probably their second is a raid on your fortune after she's free. She might file suit, for instance, for desertion and humiliating renunciation."

"Who'll her lawyer be?"

"Young chap assigned by the court. Name of Sprague. He's already put his cards on the table."

"What are they?"

"That the defense concedes the murder of one Rufus Fox by one Eva Lang in Detroit on a certain day five years ago. But the accused is not, the defense will insist, Eva Lang. She's Caroline Blythe Marsh. That's their case and they'll stick to it."

During the weeks that followed, reporters and feature writers dogged Roger. Often, on the way to his office, he heard a camera click at his elbow. Almost hourly the jangle of the telephone brought some friend offering support and sympathy, or perhaps some gossip columnist with an impertinent question. Crank letters, most of them anonymous, cluttered his mail.

It seemed to Roger he couldn't pick up a paper without seeing news of the Eva Lang affair. In a metropolitan rotogravure section, on the Sunday before Eva Lang's trial, a full page displayed twenty-nine photographs. The central one was Eva Lang. Surrounding it, each pictured individually, were all of the twenty-eight prominent Marylanders on the list she'd given for identification and vindication.

Roger himself was among them; Uncle Carey and Aunt Harriet were there; so were Effie Foster and Leslie Paxton and Dr. Cawfield. The élite of Baltimore were there. The page, in bold letters at the bottom, was titled: "The People Against Eva Lang."

When The People Against Eva Lang opened at Superior Court in Detroit, Roger Marsh sullenly absented himself from the preliminary sessions. He barricaded himself in a hotel room near the courthouse all during the selection of a jury. His radio kept him informed and he received all the newspapers. Only when called to testify would he appear in court.

It was a week before he was called. By then Eva Lang's murder guilt was clearly established and had not even been disputed by the defense. A hotel clerk had identified the accused as the woman he had seen shoot to death a man named Rufus Fox. It seemed conclusive. But in cross-examination the defense counsel had pointed to a pair of twin girls he had planted in the audience.

"Do you remember that one of

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those young ladies asked you the time on the street this morning?"

"Yes," the clerk said.

"Which of them was it?"

And the witness had been unable to say. Thus the entire case was resolved into an identification of Eva Lang.

Roger was called to the stand.

"Are you a widower?" inquired the prosecutor.

"I am."

"When did your wife die?"

"Four years ago."

"State the circumstances of her illness, death and funeral."

Roger complied in a precise voice.

"Look at the accused. Did you ever see her before?"

The defendant returned Roger's stare. Her eyes challenged him, bitter and defiant.

"Yes," Roger said. "I saw her once."

"Only once?"

"Yes."

"When and where?"

"At the Seattle jail two months ago."

"That is all. Thank you, Mr. Marsh."

In cross-examination the defense counsel asked, "Do you now concede that your wife had a twin sister named Evelyn?"

"Recently," Roger answered stiffly, "I've come to that conclusion."

"That is all."

Roger tried not to hurry as he left the courtroom. He had expected it to be worse. He'd thought the defense counsel would nag him for hours.

At his hotel room he picked up the rest of the trial by radio and printed word. Ten other Marylanders were called by the prosecution and all of them, with varying degrees of emphasis, denied that the defendant could be Caroline Marsh. All ten of them had seen Caroline buried. When the state rested, Eva Lang's position seemed untenable.

Then the defense opened and the defendant herself took the stand. She told precisely the story she'd told Inspector Whipple from the beginning. Her lawyer produced ten Baltimore witnesses himself, people he'd hand-picked after a series of interviews there. People who were uncertain enough to answer, "I don't know." One was a boy who, during the war, had delivered groceries to the Marsh home. He remembered peering into the kitchen once and seeing two women who looked just alike.

"Was the accused one of them?"

"I think so."

"Is she Mrs. Marsh or the other one?"

"I don't know."

"I don't know," or, "I can't be certain," was a response given by nine others.

A former maid at the Marsh house was asked, "Is there a faint doubt in your mind as to whether the defendant is Mrs. Marsh?"

"I'm afraid there is. I don't see how she could be Mrs. Marsh because they

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say Mrs. Marsh passed away. But she looks like her. I can't be sure."

Then came a bombshell. The defense called Mrs. Carey Marsh of Edgeton, Maryland.

"Are you Caroline Marsh's Aunt Harriet?"

"I am."

"You knew your niece quite well?"

"Of course."

"Can you look at the accused and swear she isn't your niece?"

"No," Aunt Harriet said coolly, "because I'm not at all sure she isn't."

Later Aunt Harriet herself, marching straight to Roger's room, explained the stand she had taken.

"How could you?" he demanded.

"How could I say anything else? How can I swear away her life? I'm not sure she's Caroline. But I'm not sure she isn't."

He sat on the bed and stared at her balefully. "You're not sure she isn't?"

"And deep down in your heart, neither are you, Roger."

"Are you crazy? Of course I'm sure."

"Your pride's sure," she corrected. "Your stiff-necked Marsh pride made up its mind even before you went to Seattle. You went there to say no. And you said it."

Dr. Cawfield and Leslie Paxton came storming in. "And that goes for the rest of you," Aunt Harriet blazed. "You're just like Carey. You don't like scandals. Sensations make you sick. You'll trust a cold gravestone, every time, before you'll trust flesh and blood. Stop glaring at me, Leslie. Has the jury gone out yet?"

"It has," Leslie said. He added with a grimace. "And you should have heard the judge charge them! 'If a reasonable doubt exists in your minds,' he said, 'that the defendant is Eva Lang, you will not be justified in a verdict of guilty.' "

"Doubt!" snorted Dr. Cawfield. "It's in their minds like a maggot. And you planted it, Harriet Marsh."

"Don't you bully me, Elias. They asked my opinion and I gave it. And maybe I'll sleep better than the rest of you." Aunt Harriet flounced out.

Roger packed his bags and taxied to the airport. He was in a fever to get out of town before reporters made a mass assault. From now on he didn't want any part of the case. And whatever the verdict, to him Eva Lang would still be Eva Lang.

All through the flight to Baltimore the plane's stewardess kept a radio on. A concert, then a newscast. No decision yet in the Detroit case. Passengers whispered, nudged each other, looked covertly at Roger Marsh. He sat there staring frigidly into space.

Half an hour before they reached Baltimore the flash came. The jury had reported. The verdict was "not guilty."

It wasn't over yet. Roger was dismally sure of it. Eva Lang was free and could never be tried again on this charge. But by trade she was a swindler. So was Duke Smedley. They'd already raided his good name;

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and now, given time, they'd try to raid his purse.

For a month Roger waited, dreading every ring of his phone. Would Eva contact him herself? Or would Duke Smedley do it? Probably not Smedley; being wanted on many old counts, he'd hardly dare come into the open.

Eva, Roger learned from the papers, was boldly in the open. She was still a celebrity and every move she made was publicized. The papers said she'd gone to a Florida hotel for a month's rest.

But how could she finance a trip like that? A month at a Florida resort would be expensive. Eva Lang, the prisoner, had had no money. The courts had even had to appoint a public defender.

Roger saw only one answer. Duke Smedley. While she was in custody he couldn't reach her. Now that she was free, he could and had.

This conclusion comforted Roger considerably. No doubt the police were watching Eva in hopes of picking up Smedley. And once Smedley was caught, the truth about Eva Lang would be known. For Smedley knew everything about her. He'd bridged the gap of those four years with her and so he knew, beyond a shadow of doubt, which of the twins she was.

A short time later came a report that the woman once known as Eva Lang was now in New York. She had taken an apartment as Caroline Blythe Marsh and had found herself a job. It was at the perfumery counter of a Fifth Avenue department store, exactly the job held by Caroline Blythe eight years ago when she met Roger Marsh of Baltimore.

Roger was alarmed and confused because it seemed out of character. A confidence woman doesn't usually go to work. But Caroline Marsh, thrown on her own resources, would do exactly that. She'd try to get her last job back.

Night after night he lay awake, reviewing every step of what had happened, trying to refute the vague uncertainties that had crept into his mind. What if he'd been wrong? What if this woman he had denied were really Caroline, whose love had been the most wonderful thing in his life? He kept telling himself it couldn't be.

But he *had* to know. Suddenly he realized that the entire scheme used in identifying Eva Lang had been faulty. They'd taken witnesses from Baltimore to look at her — to say whether she was or wasn't Caroline Marsh. No such scheme could be conclusive, because it was based upon opinion rather than upon incontestible fact.

A proper scheme would be the reverse. Instead of people identifying Eva Lang, Eva Lang should be made to identify people. People who'd known Caroline well, and whom Evelyn had never seen, should be paraded before Eva Lang. Recognition should then be demanded, not by the witnesses, but by Eva Lang herself.

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For instance, Eva Lang had never in her life seen Lucile Dutton. During the war Lucile had left Roger's company to become a Wave. There'd never been a picture of her at the Marsh house. From a diary Evelyn could know about Lucile but definitely she had never seen her. Therefore Evelyn couldn't possibly recognize Lucile.

But Caroline, if living, could. And would. No married woman ever forgets a girl of whom she's been jealous — a lovely secretary who'd caused the first marital quarrel.

So a test, using Lucile as a pawn, should be both simple and conclusive. Roger worked out the details and then rang up a New York client. He made an appointment for eleven the next morning.

"It's rather important," he told Lucile. "I'd like you to run up with me and make a transcript of the conference."

They caught an early train and were in New York by ten. The conference engaged them till noon, when they had lunch in a restaurant on Fifth Avenue, close to the department store where Eva Lang was working. Roger ordered generously, tried to be gay and they lingered there until almost two.

He made it sound casual when, walking to the next corner for a cab, he remarked: "I have a bit of shopping to do, Lucile. I need a new hat. Mind if we stop in here a minute?"

They turned into the store. As they threaded through the crowded aisles Roger seemed to have an afterthought. "That reminds me — I'd better pick up something for Ruth Paxton's birthday next week. How would a bottle of perfume do?"

Lucile gave him a searching look. "They can always use it," she said.

"I tell you: While I get the hat you pick up the perfume. Make any selection you like. Here." He handed her a bill. "Meet me at the Fifth Avenue exit in fifteen minutes."

Roger disappeared in the crowd. Circling, he maneuvered to an aisle about ten yards to the right of the perfume counter. He saw Eva Lang, but she, busy with customers, didn't see him.

A strange feeling of nostalgia ran through Roger. It was here that he'd first seen Caroline, eight and a half years ago. The woman back of the perfume counter today had gray-streaked hair and looked forty-five. But the hardness was gone from her face. She was gracious, charming. She looked startlingly like Caroline.

But she wasn't. Because she was now waiting on Lucile and her smile was entirely impersonal. Not the faintest flicker of recognition came to her eyes. "May I help you? Something for yourself? . . . Oh, a gift —"

Unseen himself, Roger missed no detail of it. He saw Lucile master her surprise at seeing Eva Lang. He watched her deliberately take time making her selection. The vital thing, however, was that Eva Lang didn't know her.

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Roger melted into the crowd, relieved to know that this woman was not Caroline. But mingled with the relief was the unreasonable wish that she might have been.

All the uncertainties dissolved, Roger's mind was at ease. It stayed that way till late in May.

Then, in the lobby of the Lord Baltimore Hotel one morning, a rough hand clapped his shoulder. A hearty voice boomed, "Roger Marsh! How the devil are you, Roger?"

Roger turned to see a big rubicund man in a loose tweed suit. At Roger's blank stare the man's smile broadened. "Don't you know me, Roger? Hell's bells. And I thought I'd made an impression. I must have been too easy on you."

With chagrin, Roger finally remembered. "Colonel Cox! How stupid of me! How are you, Colonel?"

Cox chuckled. "Imagine a guy not knowing his own commanding officer just because he's out of uniform!"

"What about lunch, Colonel?"

"Not today. My wife's waiting for me right now. We're stopping here. Give me a ring sometime. See you later, Roger."

Roger was thoughtful as he went on to his office. I've shared quarters with Cox in London, he reminded himself. And now, after only three years, I didn't recognize him out of uniform.

It was more than seven years since Caroline had seen Lucile. The test at the perfume counter didn't seem conclusive after all.

At his office Roger was surprised to find Uncle Carey, who was just back after wintering in California.

"Hello, Uncle Carey. How's Aunt Harriet?"

"As hard-headed as ever," Carey growled. "You know, Roger, I can't pound any sense into her about that Eva Lang. Just like a woman. They'll never admit they're wrong."

Roger's face clouded. "You mean she still isn't sure about her?"

"Less sure than ever," Carey said. "Felt sorry for her, she said, right after the trial. That's why she offered to finance her for a month in Florida."

Roger stared. "You mean Aunt Harriet paid for that trip?"

"Offered to. But Eva Lang wouldn't take it except as a loan. She said she'd pay it back ten dollars a week when she got a job. And blast it, she has. Ten dollars came in the mail every week all winter. Says she has her old job back. So Harriet —"

But Roger didn't hear any more. All the certainty of the past month came tumbling down.

On the morning of May twenty-fourth, Roger awakened with anticipation. For it was Caroline's birthday and each year he remembered it with flowers for her grave. Today this act would dispel all his doubts, bringing him back to the invincible fact of Caroline's death.

At a florist's shop he purchased a wreath and drove with it to the cemetery, parking his car just inside the gate. Elms were in leaf and the grass was green. A clean gravel path took

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him fifty yards to the Marsh family plot.

And there was her headstone. Upright and solid it stood there, a bulwark to his faith. It was his last and final witness. Standing by it steadied him now, as always.

Caroline Blythe Marsh
1917 — 1944

He placed the wreath against the headstone. Then he stood by quietly, his head uncovered. And as the minutes passed, all the nagging doubts left him. Here in this grave, where he had reverently buried her with all his world standing by, lay his wife Caroline.

Sustained and reassured, he walked fifty yards back to his car. A sound of footsteps crunching on gravel made him turn. A man, he saw, was approaching the Marsh plot from the opposite direction. The man had a florist's box under his arm.

Some old friend of the family, Roger presumed, had remembered the day and Caroline.

Getting into his car, Roger waited idly to see who it could be. At fifty yards, through the elms, he saw the man open the box and lay a dozen red roses on Caroline's grave.

Then the man removed his hat and stood there with bowed head.

He was well dressed, a personable man with brownish wavy hair. His face — with a start, Roger knew it. It was the face in a photograph Inspector Whipple had given him. Duke Smedley!

It was the face Roger had vaguely remembered having seen before.

He knew now where he'd seen it. The stranger at the funeral, four and a half years ago. The unobtrusive mourner none of them had known. He'd stood apart from the others and yet had followed them to the grave, this same grave to which he now returned.

A tribute for Caroline? It was Evelyn's birthday too. Evelyn was the woman he'd loved, not Caroline.

Duke Smedley, all along, had known the truth.

And now, with a shock of conviction, Roger Marsh knew too.

Roger swerved his car through the gate. It was not yet noon. Driving fast, he could reach New York before the store closed. There, long ago, he had found Caroline.

And there, in humble contrition, he must find her again.

Watch EQ on TV

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THE OVERSIGHT

by FREEMAN WILLS CROFTS

FOR A LONG TIME THINGS HAD BEEN growing more and more difficult for Joe Gresley. Recently his embarrassment had become so acute that he simply didn't know where to turn.

His trouble was money. He was extravagant. He liked his little luxuries; particularly he liked running around with girls. Unhappily his income would not stretch to it. When his own cash was gone he had borrowed. Now repayment was demanded and he could not meet it.

Gresley was assistant, clerk, and office boy to his uncle, Gabriel Hynds. Hynds was a commission agent, and Gresley's tiny salary was supposed to be augmented by commissions. He certainly was paid small sums in this way, but Hynds kept the plums. The plums had made Hynds well-to-do.

Gresley was not, however, so unfairly dealt with as he pretended. He had two assets in lieu of salary. First, he had free board and lodging in his uncle's house; second, the old man had made him his heir. These two facts — as well as that Hynds took sleeping tablets — were indeed what had suggested the dreadful idea which for some time had been lurking in his mind. His uncle's heir! Hynds was an old man, ailing and depressed. If only the illness were to prove fatal, all his own problems would be solved.

At first Gresley had fought the idea, and he was genuinely shocked when he realized that what he was contemplating was nothing less than murder. All the same, when a plan occurred to him by which Hynds's death could be brought about with absolute safety to himself, his struggles against it grew weaker and weaker. Presently they ceased altogether.

Hynds's establishment was a bachelor one, Hynds's wife and only son having died many years earlier. The old man in his loneliness had invited Gresley to share his house; his elderly and rather deaf housekeeper, Mrs. Toy, looked after them both. At first, things had been amicable enough, but the two men saw too much of each other, and relations had gradually grown strained.

Gresley's plan to make himself master of the house and business was, he felt, simple, safe, and certain, but it had one snag. Its execution depended on circumstances over which he had no control. He could not, therefore, carry it out when he wished, but had to await a suitable opportunity. He had, in fact, waited for over a month, till he had almost begun to fear that the chance would never come. Therefore, when on his return home on this late October evening he learned that at last circumstances were favorable, it rather took his breath away.

"The doctor called and he's re-

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newing the medicine," Mrs. Toy had said. "The master wondered if you'd call round for it?"

"Of course I will," Gresley agreed a trifle shakily. Then, remembering his plan, he went on: "But I rather thought of spending the evening at the Club. Do you know if the medicine's wanted urgently?"

"No, when you come in will be time enough, if you're not too late. It's taken last thing at night."

Gresley nodded. "Then I'll give him his dose and see to him when I come in. You needn't bother. Go to bed when you feel like it."

Frequently Gresley undertook this task and always Mrs. Toy jumped at it: he knew she would not enter Hynds's room during the evening. He went up to see his uncle, and, while reporting the day's doings, managed to abstract the old man's bottle of sleeping tablets. Hynds always took these himself, and as the bottle therefore bore his prints, Gresley held it by its cap. There were eight tablets left, and he took them to the bathroom, ground them up, and mixed them with a small quantity of milk. The empty bottle and solution he hid in a cupboard, then went down and had his supper. He finished early: it was not much after seven when he took out Hynds's small car.

He drove leisurely to Dr. Warren's and picked up the medicine from the shelf inside the porch. Like the previous bottles, it contained a white sediment which, when disturbed, clouded the clear liquid above like the milk he had used earlier. This was an important factor in Gresley's plan. Putting the bottle in his breast pocket, he drove to the Golf Club House, parking noisily and where he could be seen from the door.

The Club House formed a sort of locale for the elect. Besides the bar, there was a reading room, a card room, and two lounges. Gresley reckoned that once his presence in the place had been established, it would be possible for him to leave unnoticed for a short period, since, if he were seen again reasonably soon, each party would assume that he had been with some other.

He carried out this plan. After drinking for an hour in the bar, he muttered something about wanting a game and drifted into the corridor leading to the other rooms. From there he slipped out by a side door unobserved and made his way through the darkness to the Club bicycle rack. Borrowing the first machine he came to and keeping away from the lights at the front door, he wheeled it silently out onto the road.

From the Club to his uncle's house was about a mile and he covered the distance in five minutes. Entering softly so as to be unheard by Mrs. Toy, he went up to Hynds's room.

"I've got your medicine, Uncle," he said, handing the bottle over for the old man to examine. Hynds was fussy about his medicines and liked to read the directions himself. "Same as before," he muttered, returning the bottle.

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"As a matter of fact, it's different," Gresley lied, as he carefully wiped off Hynds's prints and pressed on his own. "I saw Dr. Warren when I called. He said to tell you he is trying a new drug. It is also a soporific, so you won't need a sleeping tablet."

"Hope it's better than this old one."

"He seemed to think so. Well, I'm off to the Club. Would you like your dose before I go? It's getting on to nine."

"Yes, you might pour it out for me."

This was going admirably to plan. Gresley picked up a medicine glass from the table. Then he stood listening.

"That's not someone at the door, is it?" he remarked. "Excuse me a moment till I look."

He left the room and walked to the stairs, but softly turned aside into the bathroom. There he poured his milky solution of sleeping tablets into the glass. Wiping his prints off it, he held it by the rim. With it and the empty sleeping-tablet bottle — which again he carried by the cap — he returned to the bedroom.

"False alarm," he declared. "I don't know what I could have heard."

He now made a show of shaking and pouring from the new bottle, though actually without loosening the cork. He carried the glass to his uncle. Hynds took it and drained it without question.

"That's strong stuff, different from the old," he remarked, handing back the glass.

"So Warren said. The other wasn't doing much good."

The old man lay back and closed his eyes. Gresley quietly wiped the rim of the glass and the cap of the sleeping-tablet bottle. After a quick look around to satisfy himself that all was in order, he left the room and silently let himself out. He was positive that deaf old Mrs. Toy, probably reading in the kitchen, had not heard him. He rode quickly back to the Club, replaced the bicycle, entered by the side door and went into one of the lounges.

"Been looking around to see if anyone had a mind for some bridge," he remarked casually; then as some men volunteered, they moved to the card room.

They had been playing for nearly two hours when a ghastly idea shot into Gresley's mind and in sudden panic he nearly dropped his cards. He had left the new bottle of medicine on the table at Hynds's bedside! If anyone were to enter the room and see it, he was as good as hanged! Then he fought his fear. No one would enter it. Mrs. Toy would be only too glad not to have to do so, and there never were evening visitors. All the same at the first opportunity he stood up.

"Terribly sorry and all that," he said, "but I must go. I've some medicine for my uncle in the car and he ought to have a dose before he goes to sleep."

He drove back, put the car in the garage, and went up to his uncle's

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room. A glance showed that all was well. There stood the bottle where he had left it. He turned to the bed and in spite of himself his heart leaped. At last! What he had so long hoped and schemed for had come about. That the old man was dead was obvious.

Controlling his excitement with a strong effort, Gresley now acted exactly as he would have done had he not paid a previous visit to the house. He went to Mrs. Toy's room, woke her up, and told her what had happened and that he was ringing up the doctor. He put through an urgent message to Dr. Warren.

Waiting for the visit, Gresley went over again what he had done, to satisfy himself once more that he had made no mistake. Beside the bed was the medicine glass containing dregs of a strong overdose of sleeping tablets; and bearing the old man's prints and his alone. The sleeping-tablet bottle also bore his prints and his alone. There was a jug of milk beside the bed which he could have used. The new medicine bottle was there unopened, bearing Gresley's prints only. There was absolutely no sign of Gresley's earlier visit. No, he had made no mistake. The circumstances proved conclusively that the old man had committed suicide, and the depression caused by his illness supplied the motive. Though he, Gresley, would benefit by the death, no possible suspicion could fall on him. . . .

Of all his many cases, Superintendent French of New Scotland Yard often said afterwards that he remembered none in which he had reached a conclusion so rapidly as in that of the murder of Gabriel Hynds by Joe Gresley. After hearing Gresley's story, his first glance round the room told him not only that murder had been committed, but also the identity of the murderer. Gresley had given himself away by an extraordinarily glaring error. Admittedly, a test was necessary to make the evidence technically suitable for court, but that first glance left no doubt whatever in Superintendent French's mind.

In a way, the case was not his at all, and he only became mixed up in it through a coincidence. He was down in the neighborhood investigating another suspicious death, and had gone late in the evening to ask Dr. Warren a final question. Warren had taken a fancy to his visitor, and when business was done had brought out whiskey and glasses, and the two men had sat chatting over the fire. When Gresley's call came, Warren suggested that French should accompany him, and after the visit he would run him on to his hotel. But when French had waited in the car for a few minutes Warren came down.

"A case here, Superintendent, the very spit of that one at Hastings we've just been discussing. Unfortunately, the man's dead and I can't yet tell the cause. Because of the coincidence would you care to come up and have a look round?"

French was not interested, but Warren had been very pleasant and

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he did not want to snub him. "No business of mine, Doctor," he said, "but I'd be glad to look round unofficially."

All this was unknown to Gresley and he therefore had no clue to what followed. After the doctor had cursorily examined the body he disappeared with a muttered excuse and arrived back with a companion, a stoutish man with a kindly expression and very keen blue eyes. "My friend, Mr. French," he introduced him. "I didn't like to leave him alone so long in the car."

In spite of Gresley's confidence that he was safe, his nerves were badly on edge. Some agitation of manner was admissible — indeed, only to be expected. But he was finding it hard to keep still and his hands tended to twitch. He thought it would help him if he re-told his story. "I saw he was dead the moment I came in, Mr. French," he explained. "Something in his appearance, you couldn't be mistaken. I rather blame myself, for if I had returned earlier with his medicine, I might have seen he was ill and got you, Doctor, in time."

"I doubt if it would have made any difference," Warren answered. "By his medicine I suppose you mean the refill I made up for him today?"

"Yes, I called at your place after supper; then instead of coming back at once, I spent the evening at the Club. Just got home a couple of minutes before I rang you. But I knew he took the medicine last thing at night, so I thought it would be time enough."

"Oh, yes," the doctor agreed. "I don't think you can blame yourself. But I'm afraid, Gresley, it's a case for the police. I couldn't give a certificate without a P.M."

Gresley had foreseen this. It was all right. The police could only find that it was suicide. "I was afraid of that, Doctor. Of course — whatever you say."

"Forgive my butting in, Doctor," French said suddenly, "but as no doubt you won't wish to leave the body, may I suggest that Mr. Gresley ring up for you?"

Gresley stared. Who was this man, so officious, teaching the doctor his job and taking responsibility on his own shoulders? He expected an explosion from Warren, but the doctor merely said, "Good idea — I quite agree. Perhaps, Gresley, you wouldn't mind?"

The reply was a curt statement that an officer would be sent at once. Gresley returned to the others. Instantly he was conscious of a change in the manner of both men, particularly in that of the doctor. They hardly glanced at him and only grunted when he repeated the message.

Then ensued a rather embarrassing period. Neither of the visitors seemed to have anything to say and Gresley had more than enough to occupy his mind. He made sporadic remarks, but they failed to provoke a discussion. At last, sounds of a car were heard and two men entered the room. Gresley recognized Inspector Cornwall

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and Sergeant Lee of the local force.

The interview went as he expected it would. Statement from the doctor that Hynds had died a very short time before — probably within minutes — and that he could not tell the cause without a post mortem. Statement from Gresley as to his movements. Statement from Mrs. Toy as to hers. All seemed innocuous. Then the man French beckoned Inspector Cornwall from the room. On their return a few moments later Cornwall's face had taken on the same grave expression that Warren's had borne when Gresley had re-entered after telephoning. With a sudden rush of uneasiness Gresley wondered what it could mean.

He was soon to learn. When they were seated, Cornwall turned to him.

"Just another question or two, if you please, Mr. Gresley. I want to make sure I've got your statement correctly. You say you picked up a bottle of medicine at Dr. Warren's some time shortly after seven this evening?"

"Yes, that's correct."

"Then you went to the Club, spent the evening there, and arrived here about ten minutes to eleven?"

"Correct."

"You didn't call here earlier?"

Gresley's uneasiness suddenly threatened to overwhelm him. Why should such a question be asked? But he had himself well under control and answered, he hoped, without appreciable delay. "No, I went from the doctor's to the Club and stayed there till I came here, as I said."

Cornwall nodded. "Well, that's clear enough. And you brought the medicine with you from the Club?"

"Yes, I said so."

"Quite. And that's the bottle?"

"That's it."

The Inspector seemed to accept all this and Gresley grew slightly more reassured. All the same it was disquieting, for he could not see where the questions were tending. They were only repeats of what he had already answered. . . .

EDITORS' NOTE: *Superintendent French solved this case almost at a glance. Pause for a moment, and review the facts. . . . What was Gresley's glaring oversight? This is one of Freeman Wills Crofts's cleverest "inverted" detective stories. So simple, so obvious, and yet . . .*

Then suddenly the end came. Cornwall turned to Warren. "Tell me, Doctor, when that medicine is shaken up, how long might it take to settle again?"

Gresley's eyes turned to the bottle, then almost started from their sockets. There it stood, solid white at the bottom, clear liquid above. It did not take the doctor's "About two hours" to show him his ghastly oversight. . .

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"His First Bow" by J. W. Wells ("a dealer in magic and spells") is one of the seven "first stories" which won special awards in EQMM's Sixth Annual Contest. It is a quiet, persuasive story, written by a true aficionado — a devotee of detective fiction in general and of Sherlock Holmes in particular. It introduces Adam Lake, a bibliophilic bloodhound, about whom, we are confident, you will hear more in the future. . . . The author did his undergraduate work at Harvard, majoring in English literature, but writing only the usual sort of college themes. Perhaps the keenest creative stimulation the author experienced came from a single semester's course in writing which he took under Kenneth Payson Kempton. Thereafter, "Mr. Wells" went into graduate studies in theology and philosophy. He is now an Episcopal minister, teaching in a theological seminary, is married and has three children. His favorite "interruptions" (to use his own word) are bibliographical research and planning a cabin for his family on an island in a lake in Wisconsin.

"Mr. Wells" calls our attention to a curious reverse-parallel. He reminds us that Dorothy L. Sayers began with detective fiction and proceeded to theology. Will "Mr. Wells" continue to pursue the opposite course?

You will have noticed that except for the first reference we have always put the author's name in quotes. "J. W. Wells" is obviously a pseudonym. Since the author writes an occasional article or sermon, he can be said to have a professional writing identity in the field of theology. Hence, his desire to have his fiction appear under a pen-name. Not that, "Mr. Wells" hastens to assure us, he is even remotely ashamed to be associated with detective stories; quite the contrary — most of his colleagues read 'tecs and would, "Mr. Wells" is sure, admire him more for a rattling good mystery yarn than for the most learned treatise in a technical journal.

So be it.

HIS FIRST BOW

by J. W. WELLS

MISS TILLEY, THE ASSISTANT CATALOGUER, came quickly across to Adam Lake's desk and spoke rather hurriedly. Her words were clipped. "There's a policeman to see you," she said.

Miss Tilley was not pretty, and in Adam's opinion not very bright ei-

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ther, but she wore beautiful clothes. Her blue dress matched perfectly the deep blue of the illuminated capitals on the manuscript that lay before him.

"You don't say. Send him in, please. I suppose he's in a hurry, if he's a policeman." Cobalt blue, cerulean, lapis lazuli. Policeman blue; the men in blue. Thin blue line. No, that was red.

Adam looked up from his musings and saw that his visitor was standing before him. Not a tall man, and not in uniform, blue or otherwise. Rather a professional-looking man, in a brown tweed suit that fitted his plumpness well. He looked across Adam's littered desk with a round, expressionless face, and Adam noted that his eyes were a clear blue — too light, however, for cobalt; rather more like a calamine blue.

The eyes stared at Adam with something like astonishment, and Adam returned to earth.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Sorry to keep you standing there. Do sit down. I'm getting absent-minded. Comes from being called on by professors. We don't have the police here every day. Quite a surprise. I didn't know the police ever needed a library."

He pulled over one of the broad colonial chairs with the Courtney shield stenciled on the back, and straightened up to find himself looking into a small leather case in the policeman's outstretched hand. He took it and examined it with interest, while its owner settled himself in the chair.

"Good clear type," said Adam, examining the case with professional interest. "Nicely set up. Lieutenant Charles Ames. Not a good picture of you, Lieutenant. Let's see, who got this up: there it is, Connelly. Well, I suppose it's not meant to be a work of art." He handed the case back, and came back to his chair. "Now, here, Lieutenant, is some good printing. Just look at this. Now what would you say, was this done by hand, or is it printed?" He carefully lifted the small piece of vellum from his desk and held it out for Lieutenant Ames to see and admire.

"Well, now," said the lieutenant, speaking hurriedly, "I guess I'd better leave the books to you, Mr. Lake. Mr. Stanton, the District Attorney, sent me down to see you. Said you could offer some expert assistance to the Department on a case we're working on."

"Stanton. Of course, I remember Stanton. Haven't seen him since college days. Saw in the *Alumni Bulletin* that he is District Attorney. I'm surprised that he remembered me."

"I guess he reads the same paper, Mr. Lake. He said you were the man to see. What the Director of the Courtney Library doesn't know isn't worth knowing, he said."

"Happy to serve," said Adam. "No, I'll make it stronger than that. I'd be delighted to see the police at work. We always say, you know, that our work here in the library is important, and yet we are probably just a little secluded here."

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"Well, now," said the lieutenant, "there's nothing official in this. Just a little advice, you know." He paused, and Adam had time to feel the difference between being official and not being official.

"This case has to do with a bookseller," the lieutenant continued. "He was killed last night in his store. His name was Mark Willoughby. Did you know him, by any chance?"

"Mark Willoughby. The name is certainly familiar. Perhaps I've seen his catalogues. What was the store called?"

"Nothing unusual. Just 'Willoughby's Books.' The store is on 75th, just off the Avenue. Only the best books, like rare books and expensive bindings. Willoughby was found there this morning by his assistant, a girl named Clark. Now the murder we can take care of ourselves, but there's also a matter that has to do with a book — one book in particular, maybe more. And we'll run into the people who deal with books — wealthy customers and collectors. That's what we want you for. I want you along to look around, and listen in, and watch for things we wouldn't notice."

"Fine," said Adam. "I'll keep my eyes open, and my ears as well."

"Then that's settled." The lieutenant stood up. "I'm afraid we'll have to start at once, if it's convenient." His voice seemed to suggest that it would, without question, be convenient. Adam put a paperweight on a pile of notes and stood up, resolutely setting the problem of the manuscript aside. The large ornamented letter on the page stared at him like a reproachful eye.

They went out of the office together and passed Miss Tilley's desk. She looked up at Adam and her face told him that the Tilley mind had achieved a theory: Mr. Lake was being taken away by that policeman. Adam was always ready to go along with a theory.

"Get word to my poor wife," he said.

Miss Tilley was reaching for her telephone as they went on past, and Adam rather regretted that he could not stay to watch.

Adam Lake, as Miss Tilley well knew in her less troubled moments, was a bachelor.

Travel through the streets of New York by taxi can be slow enough to prevent marriages and push tired businessmen over the edge of sanity. Adam, however, rather liked the time it provided for thought and meditation. Travel through the streets of New York as arranged by Lieutenant Ames was designed to prevent murder and pursue criminals, and left little time for meditation. They arrived at the corner of 75th Street before Adam had quite accustomed himself to passing violently through red lights.

Willoughby's Books was carefully noncommercial. Set back somewhat from the neighboring residences, it presented a neat window in a curved bay, now empty of exhibits, yet to

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Adam's first glance decorative in a subdued way by reason of polished mahogany paneling. Discreet and even scholarly in normal times, it had now quite obviously passed into the public domain. Two radio cars were parked before its door; several patrolmen were in evidence; and the inevitable crowd of curious bystanders, looking not very innocent, were standing by.

Hoping that he looked like the expert witness in plainclothes that indeed he was, Adam followed Lieutenant Ames down the two steps to the door of the shop. Once inside, he looked about with interest, for this, murder or not, was the world of books, and, as such, his own. The shop consisted essentially of one long room. It might well have been the library of a large home, for the furnishings were limited to the books, shelved to the high ceiling, and an occasional leather chair, table and lamp, for comfortable browsing. Adam wondered why he had never heard of the place; surely no customer, whatever his mood, could resist either the deep chairs for prolonged dipping into items of the stock, or the tall ladder inviting explorations into upper and darker corners.

Lieutenant Ames, having walked steadily into the depths of the shop, now waited for Adam in front of a fireplace that divided the left-hand wall. The room was rather dark, but Adam, approaching, could see clearly the portrait that hung over the mantel, done of an elderly gentleman in the Sargent manner, with the subject's head, sprouting mutton-chop whiskers, appearing rather yellow against a dark canvas. And standing beneath the portrait, somewhat behind Lieutenant Ames, was a girl.

She was young; about twenty, Adam judged. Dressed as she was in dark brown, she would have been almost invisible in that dark room that took its predominant tone from old bindings and rubbed mahogany — invisible, or at least unnoticed, were it not for the intense pallor of her face, startlingly white below dark hair. It was a Nineteenth-Century face, a Rosetti face, and Adam was reminded at once of a sheaf of proofs for a book at that very moment on his desk. And reminded of something else, for he was certain that he had seen her, or her picture, somewhere recently — and then realized with surprise that a strong family resemblance linked the portrait above the fireplace to the girl standing below it.

Lieutenant Ames, in his straightforward way, introduced Adam.

"Miss Clark," he said, "this is Mr. Lake, who is assisting us in the investigation of Mr. Willoughby's death."

The girl nodded, and attempted a smile, and Adam saw that she was terrified; her hands were clenched together like fused metal.

"Miss Clark," explained the lieutenant, "was Mr. Willoughby's assistant. She was the one who found him this morning in his office. Now I think, Miss Clark, that it would be

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better for you to wait for us back there until I have shown Mr. Lake the store."

The girl turned and walked off at once to the back of the room, opened a door there, and walked a little unsteadily on into the room where Mark Willoughby had been killed. It took, Adam supposed, a certain courage to do that, even now in the light of day, with the police at hand, and Adam revised his first opinion of the girl; she was probably of sterner stuff than the Nineteenth-Century heroines she resembled. But then, weren't women deceptively weak in appearance, even the poisoners and axe murderesses?

Lieutenant Ames, to Adam's gratification, now volunteered some information.

"She found him this morning, about eight-thirty. He wasn't very pretty. He'd been hit on the back of the head and had fallen over his desk blotter, and the back of his head, his neck, his suit, and the floor, were one nice mess. She was able to use the desk telephone to call us, and then made it as far as the fireplace here before she passed out. She's been in a daze ever since. We couldn't get much out of her downtown."

Here he paused and looked at Adam thoughtfully, and Adam could see that there was something else, something about the girl which the lieutenant hesitated to tell.

"She looks like old mutton-chops," said Adam, finally, after enduring the silence as long as he could.

"Well," said the lieutenant, "that's reasonable. He's her grandfather. Willoughby got most of the Clark collection of books. It gave him his start in the store, in fact. Clark's son — the girl's father, that is — sold the collection to Willoughby to keep himself in old brandy, and then died, leaving the girl without a cent — or any other relatives, for that matter. Willoughby took her in, gave her a job, and in general became a second father to her. All this about three years ago. Willoughby, by the way, is — or was — a bachelor. Age 55."

"I don't seem to remember Clark as a book collector. What subjects did he collect?"

"Well, now, perhaps you can tell from the store, here. Although I suppose most of the original collection has been sold. Not that it matters. It's a more recent book that interests us, one he just bought."

"And what was that?"

The lieutenant's round face moved enough to permit a slight smile to appear.

"See if you can guess. You're an expert. The book was having a fiftieth anniversary, and Willoughby was going to exhibit it. Pretty well-known book. At least, everybody's heard of its hero."

Adam felt that he must not let the world of letters down. What book would have been published fifty years ago — that would be, 1938 minus fifty — 1888? Gay nineties, almost. Horse cars. Gas lights.

He had it.

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A page in a catalogue arose before his mind's eye, and an article featured in *Publishers' Weekly*.

"Sherlock Holmes!" he said. "The first book edition of the first Sherlock Holmes story — *A Study in Scarlet!*"

The lieutenant suddenly beamed; his smile spread wide with satisfaction and approval. Adam felt that he had passed his examinations and would receive his degree.

"Willoughby had just been able to buy a copy. He was going to exhibit it as a study in scarlet. This, by the way, is all information received from Miss Clark. He planned a scene, using his display window as a sort of stage, in which the book would be placed dead center on a large piece of green velvet. The book is kept in a leather case, and he had that bound in scarlet."

"Rather noticeable, I should think."

"That wasn't all. He rigged up a red spotlight to flood the window with nothing but deep red light."

"A study in scarlet — I see what you mean."

"There were to be some other items in the window. On one side, a Sherlock Holmes cap and an old clay pipe. On the other side, near the door, a knife and a pistol. Here, I'll show you."

Lieutenant Ames led Adam to the front of the store and opened the small door at the end of the display window.

"The gun and the green velvet backdrop are down at the lab. The gun was right here, beside the door. Anyone could reach in and pick it up. And someone did. Picked it up, struck Willoughby with it, and then put it back. It got blood on the velvet cloth."

"And then he stole the book. It would be worth something, you know."

"No. That's an odd thing, but he didn't take the book. In fact, nothing else was touched. I've got the book in Willoughby's vault. I want you to look at it."

"So robbery was not the motive?"

"No," said Lieutenant Ames, thoughtfully staring into the empty window, "not robbery. Someone just wanted Willoughby dead, and saw his chance."

"Pretty hard to trace him if he was a transient customer."

"Well, we think it wasn't a customer — at least, not simply a stranger dropping in. Miss Clark helped Willoughby arrange the exhibit last night, and left him here alone, with the shop closed. Closed and locked. He might have let in a stranger, but more likely, at that hour, someone he knew — it was sometime after ten, from what she said."

Lieutenant Ames became silent again, and Adam let him take his time.

"Another thing," the lieutenant said, suddenly. "The book might have done it."

"Done it?" Adam felt confused.

"Attracted someone. Maybe a Sherlock Holmes fan. Mr. Stanton says they are a special group, almost fanatical. Well, that may be a crazy

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idea, but it's an idea, and we try not to overlook any idea, however crazy. You can help us there. If the book is all right, all present and accounted for, then it probably wasn't a Holmes fan."

Adam rejected an attractive image of an avid Holmes fan, killing the proprietor to get a closer glimpse of a bibliographical treasure.

"No material clues," he asked, "like fingerprints or cigar ashes? Or don't the modern criminals approve of those sentimental things?"

"Nothing definite. Prints on the gun, very blurred. Probably both Willoughby's and Miss Clark's. The lab is working on it. Willoughby was killed by a series of light blows. It could have been a woman who did it."

For some reason this brought home to Adam the tragic side of the affair. As an expert, poring over books, he could talk about murder with gusto, but here a man had been killed, and not a character in Chapter Two. . . .

"I'd like to look at the book now," he said.

Lieutenant Ames led the way to the office. Grandfather Clark's eyes watched them as they walked past the fireplace, following them as the eyes of some pictures will, and his granddaughter's eyes met Adam's as they came in at the office door. Had she inherited, together with the old man's features, his acquisitive greed, and a little of her father's moral weakness?

Mark Willoughby's office was not large. A vertical file, several chairs, and a desk filled it comfortably. One corner of the room was built as a vault, and before the door of this Lieutenant Ames hesitated briefly, and glanced at Miss Clark. Whatever he had on his mind, however, he apparently decided not to divulge.

When the lieutenant brought out the brilliant leather case, Adam took it eagerly over to the desk. Good leather work, done by a careful hand, and the color, although bright, was not in bad taste. He slid out the book itself, and whistled silently in absolute awe. It was a superb copy, with front and back wrappers intact — indeed, the most immaculate copy he had ever seen or heard of. He whistled again, this time aloud, and reported his findings enthusiastically to Lieutenant Ames.

"Then that's settled. Now, in the vault are about fifty books, probably the most valuable of the stock. Better look them over. Mr. Stanton wanted a general idea of Willoughby's business and interests. Then, of course, there's the rest of the books out in the main room."

At that moment they were interrupted. For what proved to be so momentous an interruption it began quietly enough. A patrolman put his head in at the office door.

"We have that Mr. Bellows here to see you, Lieutenant," he said.

"Good." Lieutenant Ames seemed pleased. He turned to Adam. "I want you to be in on this. Bellows is the man who sold Willoughby the Sher-

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lock Holmes book." He nodded to the patrolman. "Send him in here."

Miss Clark got up from the chair at the desk and stepped back against the wall.

"Miss Clark," said the lieutenant, "just wait for us in the other room, if you please."

There was no time. A small man, dressed in formal morning attire, and carrying a cane, gloves, and a black Homburg in a hand that shook slightly, stood in the doorway.

Mr. Bellows was not only small, he was delicate and dainty. His little face was precisely divided by a rather thin nose, and his pale eyes were watery. A mass of white hair, waved by more than nature if Adam was any judge, and bushy white eyebrows, added a touch of drama, or perhaps of melodrama, to his appearance.

Mr. Bellows paused.

"Come in, Mr. Bellows," said the lieutenant.

But Mr. Bellows, framed in the doorway as by a proscenium arch, had too good a sense of theatre to leave the center of the stage.

"How excellent!" he exclaimed, sweeping hat, gloves, and stick in a gesture that nearly took Adam in the pit of the stomach. "How fine! The stern voice of duty pulling at the oar of justice, tipping the scales through storm and sleet! The Law! Gentlemen, I give you The Law! Why, sir," he declaimed, swinging around to include in his audience a gaping patrolman, "without these denizens of the constabulary, alert from dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn, what would our poor lives be?" He leaned forward, and prodded Adam carefully in the chest. "Dead where we stand, sir, dead where we stand."

He stepped into the room, and a look of poorly simulated solemnity came over his face. His back to the vault, he stared down at the desk.

"Like poor Mark," he said. "Like poor Mark."

Fascinated though he was by Mr. Bellows, Adam saw out of the corner of his eye the uniformed patrolman enter the room, close the door, and stand with his back against it. And with that simple action something of the atmosphere of the music hall was dispelled, and the plain, paneled walls of the office again enclosed a place where death had been real. Even Mr. Bellows became silent, and Miss Clark in her corner stood rigid, her eyes closed, while the lieutenant waited, and everything seemed to wait for him.

"Now, Mr. Bellows," said the lieutenant, finally, "may we ask you a question or two about Mr. Willoughby?"

"A question or two? A hundred." Mr. Bellows placed his hat upside down on the desk, dropped his gloves into it, and leaned elegantly on his cane.

"You sold Mr. Willoughby a first edition of *A Study in Scarlet?*"

Mr. Bellows bowed.

"When was this?"

"I brought it to him yesterday, just before the noon hour."

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"And where did you get it, Mr. Bellows?"

Mr. Bellows opened his eyes very wide.

"But, sir," he protested, "such a question! It is not done. Not done at all. Oh, no, no, no!"

To Adam's surprise, Lieutenant Ames turned an inquiring eye in his direction, and this Adam took to be an opportunity for the expert to come forward.

"You were acting as an agent for someone who wishes to remain anonymous?" he asked.

"Quite so," said Mr. Bellows, with a delighted smile, appearing to notice Adam for the first time.

"But you gave it to Mr. Willoughby yourself," added the lieutenant.

"With my own hands." A startled look came over Mr. Bellows' face. "Don't tell me it is gone! Stolen! The criminal who killed poor Mark has . . ." He paused; the lieutenant was slowly shaking his head.

"It is here, Mr. Bellows. Can you identify this?" The lieutenant picked up the scarlet case from the desk and slipped out the book itself.

If Mr. Bellows had seemed theatrical before, he now presented a full circus of attitudes at the sight of the first book edition of the first story about Sherlock Holmes. He represented devotion, ecstasy, and a discreet amount of covetousness, in that order.

"That," said Mr. Bellows, "is The Book."

"Good." The lieutenant replaced the book in its case. "And what were your relations with Mr. Willoughby?"

"We had been — friends — for years." As he hesitated over the word, Mr. Bellows seemed to Adam to change costumes, becoming the man of precision, the careful historian. "He had purchased many volumes from me. We were, in truth, rival collectors. Yes, you may say," he continued, rubbing his chin with the ivory handle of his cane, "that we were fellow searchers down the byways of the world of books, pausing at the same springs of learning . . ."

"Now, about yesterday," interposed the lieutenant, his round face turning slightly pink. "You brought the book here. You gave it to Mr. Willoughby personally. Everything was as usual."

Mr. Bellows greeted each statement with a dignified bow.

"Mr. Willoughby then put the book in his vault?"

"Not at all. He met me at the front of the store and we came here, to the office. There, on the desk, we unwrapped it and looked at it together for a moment, savoring its rich, ah, significance." Adam could tell how close he had come to calling it "flavor."

"And then he put it in the display window?"

"Not while I was here. The window was not fully prepared. So I left him with it in his hands, and went my ways."

"And what were your ways for

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the rest of the day, Mr. Bellows?"

Mr. Bellows raised his white eyebrows and smiled.

"The alibi, of course," he said, and laughed silently. "Now I can tell you with some accuracy. In general, of course. I had lunch alone. After lunch I went to the Parke-Bernet Galleries for the Humphry sale, for the afternoon. Then, home to dress, and dinner with the Sellingtons. They're at the Plaza. And so to bed."

"That would be about what time?"

"Time? I have a poor sense of time. Living as I do among my books I fear I have a wretched awareness of the passing hour. Sometime between ten and eleven, I should think."

"Did Mr. Willoughby tell you anything that you think would be of help to us? About the book, perhaps, or his plans for it?"

"Not a thing. Except, of course, that it would be set on velvet, alone, like a precious jewel, a ruby gleaming against the black of the cloth, with a light directing upon it the color of blood."

"And no one was about at the time who aroused your interest or suspicion?"

And now Mr. Bellows' mannerisms seemed to fall away, and for a few seconds a perfectly sincere feeling showed on his face, and it was not pleasant.

"Yes," he said, his voice harsh, "there was someone. Someone who knew Mr. Willoughby rather too well. Someone who had a hand in his affairs, who wanted to ruin him, who hated him. Someone who answered the telephone at this desk late last night when I called Mark from my home."

Mr. Bellows swung his cane up in a slow arc and leveled it at the stiff figure of Miss Clark.

"Ask her your questions, constable," he said, his voice rising. "Ask her what she knows about the death of Mark Willoughby last night!"

He held the cane in mid-air, and the little group transfixed. Adam did not dare to look, and could not help but look, at Miss Clark. He could not tell what thoughts might be moving in that motionless head, behind her pale and classic features, now like cold marble.

Miss Clark, her back literally against the wall, gave a deep sigh and looked full at the lieutenant.

"I wondered when he would get to that," she said, in a shaking voice.

Lieutenant Ames, who had been staring at Mr. Bellows with angry astonishment in every feature, now turned to the girl.

"Just a minute," he said. He turned back to Mr. Bellows. "You phoned here last night? At what time?"

Mr. Bellows lifted his shoulders.

"Time? As I have said, time means so little to me. Nearly eleven, I suppose. Yes, quite late."

"And why did you phone?"

"I wanted to ask Mark about the window. I must confess that the whole idea intrigued me. I wondered how it looked at night, with the spotlight bringing out the full brilliance of the

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blood-red case. A perfect symbol, a perfect setting for the mood of the book."

"And Miss Clark answered the phone?"

"Yes. I never spoke to Mark at all. Miss Clark said he was — engaged." Mr. Bellows paused on the word, and his little smile became a sneer.

Lieutenant Ames glanced at the girl.

"Is that correct?"

"Yes," she said. "Mr. Willoughby was in the window at that moment. I mean, standing right in it, getting the red spotlight so that it was focused exactly on the leather case. He sent me to answer the telephone and to say that he could not be disturbed."

"And what time was that?"

"About ten, I think. We were working to get everything set up before we left, and we were just finishing."

"When did you leave?"

"Almost at once. Mr. Willoughby sent me home. He said he had some office work to do."

"And then?"

"I went home."

And that, thought Adam, would seem to be that. Yet it was clear that to Mr. Bellows it was only the beginning. He clucked his tongue, and looked hopefully at Lieutenant Ames. But the lieutenant was overtaken again by one of his silences, and when he spoke it was to Mr. Bellows.

"Now what about this matter of Miss Clark's attitude toward Mr. Willoughby?"

"Ah, yes." Mr. Bellows coughed slightly, and lowered his voice. "I should hesitate to mention this, but these are after all extraordinary circumstances. It is a rather delicate matter. A young, attractive girl, living by herself, working for a much older man who is, if I may say so, too easily smitten — or was. Yes, dear me, was. Rather impulsive, poor Mark. You can understand what I mean, perhaps? It was evident. Oh, yes, it was evident. And she did not return his interest. Did not reciprocate at all, so far as I know. He was quite a bit older, of course. It was rather difficult for her."

Adam had an unpleasant vision of the dark store, on a quiet side street, late at night, with a fatherly man making his attentions "evident."

Lieutenant Ames nodded quietly.

"Thank you. If you have nothing more to tell us we will not keep you any longer."

Mr. Bellows let his eyes flick briefly to Miss Clark and then back to the lieutenant. He bowed to the lieutenant and to Adam, passed Miss Clark as if she were not there, and walked quickly to the door. The patrolman, opening it for him, stared down frankly at the little figure as it strutted by.

The door was closed, and Lieutenant Ames turned to Miss Clark.

"Now, Miss Clark," he said, "there are several things I want to know."

It was as if a final stage in the proceedings had been reached.

"First of all," continued the lieu-

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tenant, in a businesslike way, "how many keys are there to the store?"

"Just two."

"You carried one, and Mr. Willoughby the other?"

"Yes."

"Now about this display. How much of the work did you do?"

"Just about all. We talked it over, and I suggested some of the ideas for it. Mr. Willoughby sent me out to get the things. When I had everything ready, Mr. Willoughby brought the book and case out and put them in place, and adjusted the lighting."

"That was in the evening?"

"Yes, the last thing of all, before I left. He was anxious to have it bathed in a deep red light—like blood."

Like blood. The words hung in the air, and her eyes widened with a quick fear. The lieutenant waited, and Adam was prompted to interfere.

"Do you know very much about the book itself?" he asked.

She turned to Adam with relief.

"Oh, yes, of course," she said. "When I heard that Mr. Willoughby had bought it, I got a copy from the library and read it."

"What's the story about? I haven't read it for years, and I can't remember the plot at all."

"Well, it's about revenge," she began, and stopped. She looked at Adam with an expression of sheer astonishment, of comprehension. Now what has she remembered, what have I suggested, he wondered. But the lieutenant had questions of his own to ask.

"What about this matter of Mr. Willoughby's attentions toward you. Was Mr. Bellows right?"

She nodded, only half-attending.

"He was always that way," she admitted. "Not only to me. But Mr. Bellows made it sound worse than it was."

But her voice was not convincing, and Adam could see that she knew it. It was then that the telephone on Mark Willoughby's desk rang and the lieutenant answered it quickly, as if he had been waiting for it.

"Yes?" he said. "Speaking." He waited and listened. "Good," he said. "We'll come right down."

He put down the telephone and turned to Adam.

"This is your chance to look over the rest of the books," he said. "But I don't think we'll have to know much about them. I think we have all we need, now."

He nodded to Miss Clark.

"Get your coat," he said. "We're going down to the District Attorney's office. He wants to ask you some questions."

Later that day Adam could still be surprised at the simple and final way the scene had ended. She had gone at once, the police with her, without a word, as if there were nothing more to say. Lieutenant Ames stopped to speak to Adam as he left.

"They have verified the fingerprints," he said. "Had some trouble finding them on the old gun, getting them clear. But her prints are there, and only hers. Don't spend any more

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time here than you want to; I'll be in touch with you later."

Adam browsed through the Willoughby stock for no more than two hours, finding nothing to surprise him, and returned to the library. But his mind was not on his work, and at dinner, alone in the small restaurant near the library, his mind was not on his food. He found himself experimenting with his spoon to see how clear a fingerprint he could leave; would it wipe off? Would a second one blur the first? He was unable to remember whether fingerprints were no longer bothered with by the police, or whether, on the contrary, the science had been greatly improved. Could they hang a person on the evidence of fingerprints alone?

After dinner he went back to the library. An interesting monograph on the illustrations for various editions of *Paradise Lost* lay before him. He looked at woodcuts of Satan tempting the woman and the woman tempting the man, and then he noticed, as if he had never known it before, that the man's name was Adam, and he threw the pamphlet into the wastebasket.

It was ten o'clock.

Adam went out and got a taxi. It traveled through the streets of New York slowly enough to push a tired librarian over the edge of sanity, and his meditations were not religious. At 75th Street he got out, paid his fare, and walked down the street toward Willoughby's Books.

As he came opposite the shop, he could see from across the street that Sherlock Holmes had returned. The window display was reassembled, and the red leather case burned like a coal under the red spotlight. Adam crossed the street and gazed with interest at the display. In the center, Mark Willoughby's red leather case, with the copy of *A Study in Scarlet* beside it. Against the black of the velvet the case gleamed, as the incredible Bellows had said, like a jewel.

Now, as Adam watched, a remarkable thing happened. His taxi, moved by the inscrutable impulses that sometimes activate taxis, drove part way up 75th Street and then turned around, defying various city ordinances. For two seconds or less its headlights shone straight into the window of Willoughby's Books, flooding it with bright light. And in that light the red leather case, the knife, the hat, the pipe, *were seen to lie upon a piece of green velvet.* Then, its maneuver completed, the taxi disappeared and the window was dark.

The window was dark — and now the velvet was black.

Green headlights? Nonsense. But the cloth had become green under their light.

Then memory returned.

"A piece of green velvet," the lieutenant had said. Adam was positive. And he was positive of something else.

Someone had stood, at night, looking into the window which Miss Clark and Mr. Willoughby had finished arranging; had stood there after all lights but the red spotlight had

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been put out, and the window glowed in red, set back in that dark, quiet street. Someone who had not seen the velvet cloth before and did not know it was green. Someone who was known to Mark Willoughby, who would be admitted late at night, who could slip the gun into a gloved hand, who could follow Willoughby into his office where the gloved hand became a hand of iron and struck, and struck again.

Someone whose only mistake was to tell the truth as he saw it.

Miss Tilley, the assistant cataloguer, came quickly across to Adam Lake's desk, and spoke hurriedly.

"There's a policeman to see you," she said.

"Send him right in." It was a red dress today. Very suitable, Adam thought.

Lieutenant Ames came in and greeted Adam with his usual composure.

"It was easy, after we got started," he said. "He had been on bad terms with Willoughby for a long time. And in debt. Rapidly becoming the seedy failure, all front and talk. Well, he had to sell something, and Willoughby would take nothing but the Sherlock Holmes book. His most prized possession. It touched off something crazy in the old man; he had to come back to see it displayed, and the sight of it in the exhibit really pushed him over the brink. But I don't see how you remembered about the color."

"Trivial detail," said Adam. "That's what the bystander always notices. I remembered that you had called the cloth green. When Bellows called it black, he was talking about jewels, and they are usually set on black, so it passed quite naturally."

"But how did you know that any color but red turns black under pure red light?"

"Ah, that, now, was interesting. We were going to photograph an illuminated manuscript, and I took it to the photographer to be done. Chap had the red safe-light on, and I noticed that all the colors of the illuminated initials *with the exception of the red ones* turned black under the red light. The photographer explained it to me."

"It was good work," said Lieutenant Ames, with quiet approval; to Adam, it was like an honorary degree. "Of course, the book itself probably interested you more than anything else. Too bad it was of no help at all."

"It could have been, though," said Adam, with a smile. "It could have suggested one of Sherlock Holmes's most famous remarks."

"What was that?"

"I'll paraphrase it. 'I call to your attention the peculiar behavior of the cloth in the night.'"

"But the cloth did nothing in the night," said the lieutenant, falling unconsciously into the proper response.

"That was the peculiar behavior," said Adam, delighted. "Oh, well, it almost fits. It's as close as lesser mortals can hope to come."

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LOST & FOUND DEPARTMENT: *The Lonely Bride*

by ELLERY QUEEN

CERTAIN THINGS should come together: for example, one shoe and another or one love bird and another. So when Ellery observed on the fourth finger of his beautiful young petitioner's left hand a circlet of entwined golden roses which had not yet lost the bright dew of the jeweler's garden, he grasped at once the missing complement: a groom, probably young and almost certainly a fool or a rascal. Only folly or worse explained a newlywed husband who left such a bloom untended.

Her name was Shelley, she confessed in the Queen apartment, she was a New Yorker from Evanston, a model by profession, and the fellow having seen her laminated in four colors on a magazine cover had pursued her with such wolfish purpose that she found herself one day in the City Clerk's office being made Mrs. Jimmy Browne. For their honeymoon they had cruised the world, madly rich in love, and lesser goods, too, for young Mr. Browne seemed bottomlessly supplied with the vulgar commodity by which lovers satisfy their appetites for giving, and he was insatiable. On their return to New York three days before, he had set her up in a princely furnished suite at L'Aiglon Towers, excused himself "for a few hours on a little business matter," kissed her passionately, and she had not seen or heard from him since. It then occurred to Mrs. James Browne, a little tardily, that she knew nothing whatsoever about her dark, tall, handsome spouse. Accordingly, she had hunted through his things and found in his bureau drawer, rolled up in a pair of cashmere hose, two specimens of United States folding money bearing the rare portrait of Salmon P. Chase — apparently Mr. Browne's golden umbrellas against a rainy day. Mrs. Browne's $20,000 question was: Who, why, and where was her husband?

Ellery gloomily excused himself and went into his study to telephone one or two ruffians of his acquaintance. On his return he said sadly: "As I suspected. Mrs. Browne, your husband is a professional gambler known to the fraternity as The Boy Wonder. The two ten-thousand-dollar bills are undoubtedly his emergency poke — he shot the rest of his roll on your courtship and honeymoon — and he has been closeted since Tuesday in a hotel room off Times Square

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frantically trying to replenish the exchequer at the expense of a gent known as Big T. I'm afraid love has forced Jimmy to go out of his class. Big T is large time and he played poker when Jimmy was playing tag."

At this point Ellery made a mental note to find out more about Evanston; because all that Shelley said was, "Then I'd better get back. Jimmy will be needing that twenty thousand and he won't find it in his socks because I hid it in the apartment in a safer place. Thanks, Mr. Queen. I'll take care of this myself."

And she would have done so, Ellery felt sure, had not a coal-truck driver ruled otherwise. As Ellery handed Shelley Browne into a taxi the truck careened to avoid a pedestrian and crashed into the cab. The truck driver blubbered, the cab driver raged, and the cover girl lay in a broken heap on the taxi floor. The ambulance doctor said it was concussion and possible internal injuries; he looked grim. Ellery felt a sudden gripe of responsibility; he knew Big T. So he stooped over her and he said, distinctly, "I'll follow through, Shelley. Just tell me where you hid Jimmy's nest-egg." Shelley whispered back, "In a book," and then her *crème de violette* eyes turned over and the ambulance took her away.

Later that day Jimmy Browne stumbled from his wife's room at Floral Hospital into Ellery's embrace.

"They won't know for hours, Queen." He was haggard, blackly boyish. "She's still unconscious."

"And it's 3:07," mused Ellery. Jimmy had dropped twenty-seven Gs to Big T, he had had with him only seven Gs in cash, and Big T had politely requested the balance by 6 P.M. "We'd better start looking for those two ten-thousand-dollar bills."

"Queen, she's going to die."

"Not necessarily, but you're a sure thing. Big T lives by the code, and you know the sub-paragraph on welshers. Come on."

As they trotted down the hospital corridor Jimmy promised, "Queen, if Shelley and I pull out of this I swear I'll quit the racket for good. I won't even play Bingo. So help me, I'll get a job! Where did Shelley say she hid that dough?"

"In a book."

"Book?" Jimmy stopped. "In *our* apartment?"

"That's what she told me."

"Why, we just took the joint. There isn't a book in it!"

To deteriorate matters, they reached the doorway of the Browne suite at L'Aiglon Towers to find Cookie Napoli's back wedged into it. Cookie Napoli was the size and shape of a Macy's Thanksgiving Parade balloon and his affection for sweetmeats and mayhem was legend in Manhattan's sinks.

"What's the matter, Moby Dick?" snarled Jimmy. "Doesn't Big T trust me?"

"Believe it or not," said Cookie, probing among his massive molars for a fragment of fig newton, "I'm just waitin' for a payoff."

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"3:29," muttered Mr. Queen; and he followed The Boy Wonder and Big T's emissary into an apartment all squares and curves and violent pastels, furnished with pieces of vast rhomboidal furniture and elegantly bespattered with art, from Picasso- and Archipenko-type abstractions to a grand piano of steel tubing.

But of literature no sign. Ellery scowled at the bookshelves. He had visualized a young wife defending herself against mental torture during those three husbandless days by buying stacks of murder mysteries or such, but apparently Shelley had not escaped by this route. The shelves were mighty and might have borne the world's weight of printed wisdom, but they were merely crammed with souvenirs. In the lunacy of their honeymoon Jimmy had lavished on his cover girl all the wealth of the tourist Indies and beyond — bazaar brassware, a teakwood Sacred Cow, a carnelian camel from Djibouti, Chinese old-men ivories, a jade Buddha, a Tibetan prayer-wheel, a Grecian urn, a Tyrolean bride in metal bas-relief attached to the back of a felt-bottomed marble base, a plaster miniature of the Colosseum, a china shepherd and a shepherdess from Dresden . . .

"Don't bother with that stuff," cried Jimmy, crawling around inside the amphitheatre of the imitation Italian fireplace. "She said a book."

"I know what she said," mumbled Ellery; but while Cookie devoured half a dozen ladyfingers he examined each *objet d'amour* painstakingly to convince himself that no crevice or secret recess concealed the two images of Secretary Chase.

Afterward, Ellery looked thoughtful. He removed his jacket.

At 4:06 the eminent sleuth raised a dusty nose to announce: "There is positively no book in this apartment, not so much as a memo or telephone book. And there are no ten-thousand-dollar bills, either. Still, Shelley said . . ." And he threw himself on the sofa and closed his eyes . . .

"No change yet," said Jimmy Browne hollowly, dropping the telephone. Cookie reached into his bulging pocket and Jimmy blanched. But the flipper came out clutching a bag of coconut macaroons.

At 4:31 Ellery raised his head from the angular couch on which he labored. "I've decided," he said, "that something is missing in this room."

"Sure, twenty grand. *Stop munching, you cow!*"

At 4:53 the telephone screamed. Cookie almost dropped a Nabisco. It was the hospital. Mrs. Browne was still unconscious, but the prognosis was suddenly good. She would live. Jimmy promised again. "But what good will a dead husband do her? Queen, I was leveling — I'll look for that job." Wildly he eyed the door. "Just find my dough!"

"Big T's dough, I believe," said Cookie courteously, and when his hand emerged this time it grasped an inedible roscoe, which he began to examine with earnestness.

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And then, at 5:13, Ellery sprang from his bed of pain. "I was right!"

"About what?"

"There is something missing in this room, Jimmy. Now I know where Shelley hid those bills!"

CHALLENGE TO THE READER: *You now have all the facts . . . Where did Shelley hide the two $10,000 bills?*

"Jimmy," said Ellery, "certain things are inseparable. Shoes, for instance. Lovebirds." He took Shelley's Tyrolean bride from the bookshelf; the marble base was heavy and he hefted it smilingly. "What was missing was this bas-relief lady's husband. *Whoever heard of a bride without a groom?*"

Jimmy stared. "Say. There *were* a pair. But where's the other one?"

Ellery hefted the little lady again and then he hurled her, straight and true, at Cookie Napoli, who was thoughtfully edging toward the door. The Tyrolean bride caught Big T's trigger-man on the chin; Cookie landed on the floor, Jimmy landed on Cookie, and Ellery landed on the roscoe. "When we found Cookie outside your door we assumed he was waiting. Actually, he was leaving. But he had to brazen it out . . . Ah, a sack of fudge squares, and what's this in his other pocket? The missing bridegroom. Felt's loose, metal bas-relief is hollow, and I believe — yes — you'll find your ten-thousand-dollar bills inside. Cookie heard us coming and pocketed the works for future reference."

"But she said — Shelley said —" Mr. Browne spluttered as he tore at the shell of the metal bridegroom "— Shelley said she hid it in a book."

"Bas-relief — meaning a flat back — attached to a marble base with a felt bottom — and they come in pairs. Poor Shelley passed out before she could finish her sentence. What your wife meant to say," said Mr. Queen, grasping the roscoe more firmly as Cookie stirred, "was 'In a book*end*.'"

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Walter Duranty needs no introduction these troubled times. You all remember him as the famous foreign correspondent of "The New York Times," who was stationed in Moscow for nearly twenty years, who won the Pulitzer Prize for reporting in 1932, and who was the author of two such different books as I WRITE AS I PLEASE *and* ONE LIFE, ONE KOPECK.

In 1928, Walter Duranty won first prize for the best short story of the year — "The Parrot." The award was made by the O. Henry Memorial Committee, three of whose Final Judges that year were Blanche Colton Williams, Chairman of the Committee and Head of the Department of English at Hunter College; Frances Gilchrist Wood, author; and Professor Franklin T. Baker of Columbia University. Actually, Miss Williams and Mrs. Wood both ranked "The Parrot" as the Number One short story of the year, while Professor Baker ranked it Number Six; but in the average ratings based on the combined appraisals of all five Final Judges, Mr. Duranty's story achieved first place.

Blanche Colton Williams was impressed by Mr. Duranty's "realistic detail." Mrs. Wood was gripped by the instant conviction that "here is a story of the actual Russia, neither guessed at nor faked." Professor Baker described "The Parrot" as "a grim, realistic bit of melodrama."

Two further comments: first, this is a fascinating tale of a boy detective in Russia — twelve-year-old Sergey McTavish, orphan son of a Scottish soldier of fortune and a German farmer's daughter; second, this story was first published in 1928 — which accounts for some of the anachronisms, including the amazing one in which Mr. Duranty says that "It is a habit the Russians have, to deprecate everything Russian." Try and catch the Russians deprecating anything Russian now!

THE PARROT

by WALTER DURANTY

THE BOXCAR RATTLED AND SWAYED as the train jerked slowly out of the station, but the big sergeant standing at the open door balanced himself easily in his thick felt boots. He held Sergey McTavish by the collar of his astrakhan tunic and the seat of his breeches, kicking and wriggling like a retriever pup. Then he swung the boy up level with his

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shoulder and threw him sprawling on a snowdrift.

"There," he said, "you young devil, that will teach you to steal potatoes from the army and sell them to dirty food speculators. You have the red head of an imp from hell, and the black heart of a capitalist. We have done with you."

So ended the six-months' career of Sergey McTavish as mascot of the seventh battalion of Red Army Riflemen.

During those months he had tasted victory — in the swift advance to the gates of Warsaw — and defeat — in the hungry flight back across the frontier; he had come to swear like a Russian soldier, who swears with strength and zest; and he had looted gloriously — the astrakhan cloak on which the battalion tailor had worked all night, jolting cross-legged in a mule-cart, to make round cap, tunic, and breeches. But he had not learned discipline or honesty; neither overcurrent in the Red Army of those days; and so here he was, gasping for breath on a snowdrift in the outskirts of a little town in the Ural foothills.

When he got his breath back, Sergey scrambled to his feet and turned to curse the big sergeant as worst he knew how. But the tail of the train was blank and black in the December twilight, growing smaller every second, too small to be worth cursing.

Sergey Sergeyitch McTavish, twelve-year-old orphan, son of a Scottish soldier of fortune and a German farmer's daughter from the old Volga "colonies," was alone, friendless, penniless, and hungry in a windswept freight yard, with nothing in sight but the meager huts of the station and rows of roofless cars whose broken sides stuck out like jagged teeth. Sergey regretted now that he had been so smart and witty a few hours before at the expense of the station commandant, a thick-headed Lett. His comrades on the train had roared with laughter and kept off the angry Lett when Sergey dived among them for refuge. The light in the station hut meant warmth and food now, but Letts are a stubborn and unforgiving people. No, there was nothing for it but to tramp the three miles back to that dismal town.

Damn potatoes anyway, and speculators! If they had only left him the money! That brute of a sergeant had grabbed every kopeck.

But a veteran of the Polish war knows worse things than hunger or cold or darkness. The boy dragged his cap down over his ears and set off toward the town.

As he crept under the second of three lines of dismantled freight-cars, his nose caught full blast the smell of cooking food. Right before him in the third row, one car was intact, light shining behind the little window in the door, and smoke pouring from the stovepipe at the roof-corner.

Without hesitation Sergey banged his fist upon the door. It slid open immediately, and a girl looked down at him.

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"Come in, stranger," she cried. "We are expecting you. But tell me quickly, is it to heaven or to hell that we owe the pleasure of your visit?"

"He who sent me here said I had the red head of an imp from hell," replied Sergey, swinging up by her outstretched hand and slamming the door behind him. "So you can understand I find it cold here, and am hungry, after my journey."

The girl brushed off his cap and pulled him forward under the kerosene lamp which hung from the middle of the roof.

"Red as hell's flames," she muttered admiringly. "That should keep you warm, and we will fill your belly. My father, here, just said it would take a saint or a devil to conquer my problem, and I told him as you knocked that even Saint Nicholas the Wonder-worker would never dare risk his wings in Russia today."

A roar of laughter from a heap of straw in the corner near the stove.

" 'Tis but a little imp for so great a task, Marfoosha, and I doubt if the Prince of Devils himself is a match for the Baba Papagai, who beyond doubt is his own grandmother."

There were three people in the car, the girl, comely and slim with a tangle of blonde hair, red shirt tucked into short blue kilt, and high black leather boots; the man, in khaki uniform, lying on the straw, fat brown cheeks, quick little black eyes in a bush of iron-gray hair, and whiskers; and a small bent figure by the stove, so wrapped in a service overcoat of the old Imperial army that nothing was visible but a white wisp of beard, a bald shining pate, and two pink pointed ears.

"Comrade imp," said the girl, "I present my grandfather, who lives alone in this car, being wise and having money, but not wise enough to help me in my trouble; and my father, who is commandant of the prison, but unable to save my lover, his prisoner, from . . ."

"Don't forget to present Comrade Soup also," broke in the old man with a chuckle, "and little Comrade Vodka in his bottle, who is best of all." And, plunging an iron ladle into the steaming pot, he filled an earthen bowl and passed it to the hungry boy.

Twice Sergey emptied the bowl, breaking chunks of black bread into the hot liquid. Then he gulped a stinging mouthful of spirit from the bottle, and taking a palmful of green flake *mahorka* and a scrap of newspaper from the old man, twisted the cone-shaped cigarette of the Russian soldier, lighted the upturned flap with a sulphur match and, putting the small end of the cone between his lips, puffed out a cloud of evil-smelling smoke.

"What is this trouble you speak of," he asked, "and who is the Parrot Woman, the Baba Papagai?"

All three of his hosts spoke at once, in noisy excitement. There was a young man, a foreigner, a prisoner, an American, a soldier, who had come somehow from somewhere eastward on a train, young and cheerful and

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clever with his hands beyond belief; and the girl Marfoosha loved him, and he had mended the electric light for the prison and later for the whole town, and at first he was quite dumb like a beast, but now he spoke humanly enough after several months; and two weeks ago the Soviet had agreed to let Marfoosha marry him, because they wanted to keep him in the town to start again the nail factory as he had promised, and because he was cheerful and had blue eyes and brown curly hair, and Marfoosha loved him and wanted to marry him, and would die too if he were killed.

This Sergey learned first, because the girl talked fastest and loudest, but through it all beat like the drum in a regimental band the name of the Parrot Woman, Baba Papagai, who was a witch and a demon and the grandmother of all the devils.

She had a familiar spirit, this terrible woman, a parrot, red and gray, in a wire cage; and when it bit you, you were guilty; and when it didn't, you were innocent; but it always bit you, and so you were always shot.

Nobody knew where she came from, but it was said she was the widow of a famous revolutionary who had worked in a factory at Ekaterinburg, and had been shot by the Czar's army in 1906. And now she was president of a "Flying Tribunal," that moved about the whole province judging counter-revolutionaries; and always she made them put a finger in the parrot's cage, and always it bit them, and then they were shot. And it was reported that she lived on the smell of blood and must kill a man every day or she would die and the Devil, her grandson, would fly off with her. And when the Soviet knew she was coming to hold court in the town, they were all very frightened, because there was only one victim, the ex-manager of the factory, who twice had tried to escape from the town and had been prevented. One man would never be enough for the Baba Papagai. She would suspect the Soviet of being lukewarm in the cause of revolution, and perhaps put some of them to the trial of that horrid parrot, as had happened before elsewhere, always with fatal results.

So four days ago the Soviet had held a meeting hastily and in secret, and had decided to sacrifice their American. They were sorry, but it was his head or theirs, no argument was possible. They'd put high hopes on his reopening the factory; but after all, he was a stranger and a prisoner, and it was said the Americans were fighting to help the counter-revolution, and it was he or they, and finally there was just a chance that the parrot wouldn't like the taste of foreigners and fail to bite him.

Marfoosha and her father, who, as prison commandant, felt most uneasy about the whole affair, had come to ask the advice of the hermit in the boxcar. But he had been of no help to them, and the father had said it would take an angel or a devil to find the way out of the mess, and just at that second Sergey had knocked,

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and said at once he was an imp from hell, so what would he suggest?

Sergey's Scotch blood whispered caution. He puffed his *mahorka* cigarette and declared profoundly that there was a solution for every problem, but this case being extremely difficult, he had better set eyes first on the woman and her parrot, to say nothing of the American and the ex-manager of the factory, before deciding what should be done. There was a twinkle in Marfoosha's eye as she received his verdict, and the boy was reassured as to the reality of her belief in his diabolic origin; but the prison commandant and his elderly parent were ready in approval.

"Never drive pigs too swiftly," said the ancient, banging the cork of his vodka bottle hard against the side of the car, and burying it in the recesses of his greatcoat. "Let our Comrade Imp view the situation for himself, and maybe he will be able to make a plan. For me, I am at a loss — I admit it freely; the young man must die: there is no doubt of it."

"Everyone must die some day," replied his son, "and I, as commandant of a prison, know that some die quicker than others. But this American is a friendly youth, and clever with his hands, and Marfoosha loves him dearly; so I want his life saved and no trouble with this infernal old woman. If the flame-headed Imp can help us, I, Alexei Petrovich, promise that he shall have all the food he needs in this cold country, and a warm corner by my fire to toast his toes till they are as red as his hair."

All of which sounded good to Sergey McTavish as he said goodbye to the old man, and accompanied Marfoosha and her father across the cold white plain to the little town.

Far off, beneath the low roofs of the town, windows poured a flood of light upon the snow.

"What makes your town so bright?" asked Sergey.

"I told you the American fixed our electric machines for us," said the prison warden. "I guess you are surprised to see one of our towns using electricity these days."

He emphasized the word "our" with a faintly sneering accent. It is a habit the Russians have, to deprecate everything Russian.

"And now," he went on mournfully, "even this town won't have any electricity any more. When he's gone, the whole works will be *kaput* in no time. Oh, that Baba Papagai and her parrot! To think that a miserable bird could bring such trouble upon us!"

"You say it's a bird?" asked Sergey, who had never seen a parrot in his life and had not the least idea whether it was bird or beast or perhaps a new kind of Soviet commissar. "Well, if it's only a bird that's worrying you, why don't you kill it?"

"Kill it!" almost shouted Marfoosha. "Why, you might as well talk of killing Lenin!"

"Shh!" cried her father sharply. "You mustn't talk like that!" He caught Sergey by the shoulder. "See

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here, little comrade, you don't understand. It's not a bird, really; it only looks like a bird. But it talks like a man, and it tells her, the Baba, what she must do. Who shall say which is the master, the parrot or the parrot woman? Everyone knows there are things like that, which come out of the dark to serve those who sell their souls to Darkness. You can't kill them, ever, the dark spirits, but in the old days a priest could drive them away with the name of God and holy water. And now the priests are spat upon and hide in holes, and God has turned His face from our Russia, which is become a plaything for the evil ones."

Sergey McTavish shivered. This was ill talk, of spirits from the dark, and the man's fear was infectious. But he bit tight on the life rule which had steeled him and his father and his father's father who died to check Osman Pasha's last sortie from Plevna — "No Scot can show fear before a Russian."

"That is stuff for women and children," he said stoutly; "but we men of the Red Army care neither for gods nor devils; and besides, why worry about the ford till you come to the river?"

His companions made no answer, and all three trudged on in silence.

The prison was a large house set back among tall trees whose branches hung glittering with frost in the light of an electric arc-lamp.

In the high, square entrance hall two men were sitting before a huge fireplace, ablaze with round birch logs thick as a man's body. The younger leaped up as they entered, tall and loose-limbed, in a uniform of dark mustard color such as Sergey had never seen. In two strides, so it seemed, he was across the room, lifting Marfoosha right off her feet into his arms.

There was more delight than anger in her squeal of protest.

"Enough, Mahlinkie, enough," cried Marfoosha in a stifled voice. "Put me down — we have a visitor, bad-mannered one!"

Regaining her feet, she flung her arm round Sergey's shoulder. "This is my American, little comrade; his name is Djim, but that is a dog's name, not a man's, so I call him Mahlinkie, the little one, because he is so tall." She laughed gayly and pushed the boy forward, pulling off his hat with her other hand. "Look, Mahlinkie, it's fire, but it doesn't burn."

"Fortheluvamike!"

Sergey McTavish did not understand this American greeting, but something within him called forth two half-forgotten words in reply. "Scottish, gorrd-am-you-sirr."

The effect was startling. High in the air went Sergey in those strong young arms, while a torrent of unfamiliar words beat upon his ears. What a din they made! Sergey, six feet from the ground, beside himself with excitement, yelling his new found slogan, the American shouting strange noises, and Marfoosha dancing around.

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The prison warden and his friend by the fire rushed forward in panic. "Are you mad?" cried the former, catching his daughter around the waist. "Stop this uproar. You don't know what's happened. She is here already, staying in Petrusha's house."

Marfoosha halted as if struck by lightning, and the American stiffened, holding Sergey in mid-air.

Slowly he lowered the boy to the ground, still grasping him firmly under the arms. An instant's silence; then the warden continued: "She came tonight, with her parrot — saints defend us — and holds court tomorrow. Very angry when she heard there were only two cases. She will judge the factory manager in the morning; and the next day" — he jerked his thumb towards the American — "it's his turn. They say we are lucky. He's a foreigner — she was quite interested and said no more about our scarcity of prisoners."

There was no answer to these words save a low sound from Marfoosha. She had fainted.

Sergey McTavish awoke next morning from a tormenting dream of gray devil-birds with red tails pecking at his breast, to find Marfoosha and her American standing beside the bench on which he had passed the night before the fire.

The girl's face was red and swollen with weeping, but her lover wore a friendly grin.

"Wake up, little comrade, wake up and eat your breakfast, for there's work for you to do." She had tried to speak cheerfully, but as Sergey rubbed his eyes she sank down in a heap beside the bench, sobbing desperately.

The tall American tried vainly to comfort her: "Marfoosha, my darling, my baby girl, don't worry."

Sergey McTavish sat upright. How stupid girls were, not to understand that death was part of a soldier's job! He pulled Marfoosha's hair sharply. "Stop crying," he said, "and tell me what's the matter."

Marfoosha shook herself free. "All right," she said to her lover, "but you go and let me talk to him alone."

And then to Sergey: "The Baba Papagai is in a frightful humor. We know it from Petrusha. She had her parrot at breakfast with her, early, two hours ago before it was light, and sat there talking, talking. She said to him, '*Belogvardeyetz*' (White Guard), and the parrot answered, '*Belogvardeyetz*,' and then the Baba Papagai laughed and the parrot said over and over again, '*Belogvardeyetz*,' and the Baba Papagai laughed some more. You, Sergey Sergeyitch, do you know what that means?"

"No," said Sergey uneasily, with a spoonful of *kasha* poised halfway to his lips.

"Death! That's all! Just death for my American!" Marfoosha laid her head on her arms, then straightened up and rattled on breathlessly: "The court opens at ten o'clock. You go there. It will be just a general rehearsal. The Baba Papagai is having

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her rehearsal this morning. The real show is when my American comes before her." Marfoosha's voice faltered. Sergey again stopped eating.

"She knows it. She told Petrusha she had heard of this American in town. She said she had never before had the chance to try her *papagai* on an American. She cursed America. She said it was the sink of all iniquity, a den of wolves, the castle of capitalism. She said that all Americans were White Guards, and when she said 'American' to her parrot this morning, it just answered, '*Belogvardeyetz.*' Sergey, go see for yourself."

Sergey put the half-empty *kasha* bowl on the floor. He had lost his appetite.

"What time is it?" he asked.

"Near ten," answered Marfoosha. "Come with me — I'll show you the way."

Ten minutes from her home Marfoosha stopped, took Sergey by the arm, and pointed straight ahead.

"There it is," she said.

"What, the church?" asked Sergey.

"It used to be the church. Don't you see the guard in front? Now go, please, and come to us as soon as it is over." Marfoosha took Sergey's head in her arms, pressed it to her heart until he struggled to get free, then released him with a push.

Sergey McTavish recovered his balance, frowned a moment at the retreating figure, then proceeded warily toward the church. There was nothing strange to him about a Cheka trial taking place there. Even when other buildings were available, the "Flying Tribunals of the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolutions" had found that their sessions made a far greater impression on their White Guard enemies if they were held in the church. It appealed, too, to the Red sense of humor.

In front of the building, beneath an ikon of the Virgin Mary, a Red Guard paced up and down, his conical cap pulled tight over his ears to meet the threadbare collar of an old gray overcoat. The buttons, cut off because they had borne the insignia of the Czar, were replaced with string. When Sergey approached, the Red Guard dropped the butt of his rifle nonchalantly in the snow, crying, "What do you want, little princeling?" with an ironic wink at the boy's astrakhan suit.

"Don't call me names, comrade," grinned back Sergey. "I'm Red Army too. This is loot, issued me by the regimental tailor, Seventh Battalion Rifles. Just lost touch with headquarters. Now be a good comrade and give me a cigarette and let me go inside and get warm a bit."

The sentry laughed, said he'd no tobacco but obligingly turned his back while Sergey slipped past into the church.

For a moment he could see nothing in the dim interior save two tall candles on the altar above which an ikon glittered with gold and jewels.

Very quietly he groped his way forward to the last of a number of

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rough wooden benches which had been placed in the nave, and sat down behind rows of people bent forward in eager attention. At the other end of the church a man was speaking in a high-pitched voice, trailing off at times into falsetto. The words came rapidly, tumbling over one another, hardly intelligible. Sergey could only catch a phrase now and then — "never . . . Czar's government . . . always tried to work for the people . . . worker myself . . . not my fault . . . education . . . no counter-revolutionary, believe me, believe me, believe me."

Cutting this babble like a saw, another voice, metallic, harsh, rasped a single word: "*Belogvardeyetz!*" (White Guard)

Then a loud laugh. Then silence.

Sergey's eyes, by now accustomed to the semi-darkness, sought the source of the inhuman voice. With a shiver of interest he realized the word "*Belogvardeyetz!*" had come from a cage swinging beneath a stiff gold embroidery attached like a banner to a pole, which stood at the left of the altar. Within the cage a gray-red bird moved listlessly on its perch. That was the bird that talked like a man, but who had laughed?

Near the altar a woman was rising to her feet behind a table draped with red cloth. Erect, she loomed enormous, six feet or more in height. Traces of mocking laughter were still about her lips, but her eyes bore no sign of it. The flickering light gleamed on abnormally protruding eyeballs, threw into relief a network of swollen veins on either temple, and showed her thickened throat bursting from the collar of a soldier's tunic.

Sergey felt his hands shake as they fumbled for his pockets. He needed no one to tell him this was the Baba Papagai.

With a gesture of impatience she pulled off the cap, revealing a thin growth of gray hair. The woman was nearly bald.

She turned to the left where a man was standing, thin and crumpled, between two soldiers with fixed bayonets.

"Counter-revolutionary!" she bellowed suddenly. The man staggered. "I know what you want to say, citizen. You never carried on counter-revolution. You never harmed or oppressed anyone, never resisted the proletariat; in fact, you admire the revolution intensely and think Lenin and Trotsky the greatest men in history. Yes, I know all that; I've heard the same story before, often." Her voice deepened and again became harsh. She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and resumed: "Fortunately, fortunately, we have here with us the means of seeing beneath those fine words, right to the inner secrets of your heart. You are surprised, perhaps, that an ignorant old woman like me should see, should be able to know the secret heart of an 'intelligenter' like you; but I don't pretend so much. It is this wise bird here, who is older than I, older, it may be, than anyone in this town,

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who by long experience can recognize a counter-revolutionary at first glance, can smell the black soul of him in one sniff."

Her voice had become monotonous, rising and falling like that of a priest reciting some familiar ritual.

"Walk forward, my friend of the people, walk forward, and put your finger into the cage of my little comrade, that he may take a sniff at it. Perhaps you are innocent, as you would have us believe. The little comrade will know, because he never makes a mistake. If you are innocent, he will do you no harm, will not touch your finger; but if your hand has offended against the People" — again that inhuman roar — "he will bite it to the bone, and after my judgment, you shall receive your punishment."

She made a sign to the soldiers, who took the cringing man by the arms and dragged him toward the parrot's cage. The man shrank within his coat as if wishing to wither up and slip out of his clothes, leaving them in the hands of his guards. They grasped him more firmly and urged him forward. The candlelight glanced from their bayonets and played across the bulging eyes of the Baba Papagai as she mockingly reassured the terror-stricken figure in their hands.

"Have no fear, little servant of dogs. That bird is a proletarian. You said you loved the workers. If it's true, the *papagai* will never touch you. Nor will I."

There was no sound save the prisoner's feet dragging across the floor as the soldiers carried him to the last instance of justice. He had slumped down in their arms so that when they reached the foot of the golden banner, his head fell in the shadow cast by the bottom of the cage. In the attempt to raise him upright, the guards brought his forehead heavily against it. The impact shook the parrot. It ruffled its feathers, stretched its wings, brought them tightly back against its body, and hopped expectantly forward on its perch. Its indifference was gone; its beady eyes were watchful.

A murmur of awe, or wonderment, or horror, floated from the shadowy figures which filled the benches. It was cut short by the voice of the Baba Papagai.

"Carry out the procedure, Soldiers of the Revolution. If the servant of dogs cannot lift his hand, lift it for him."

The prisoner struggled. One of the soldiers deftly twisted the left arm of the writhing man behind his back and pushed it upward until he gasped: "I'll do it." The soldier released the pressure on the twisted arm and the prisoner stood upright. He lifted his right hand with extended forefinger and thrust it forward by short jerks. Twice he dropped his hand, and twice the soldier pressed the hammer-lock until he gasped again: "I'll do it."

The third time, his finger reached the cage. It trembled so that he was unable to poke it through the bars. The other guard grasped it firmly and pushed it into the cage.

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The parrot eyed the prisoner's hand. Cocking its head on one side, it cast its beady gaze appraisingly at the forefinger that shook as though playfully just below its beak. Its claws against the perch made a faint scratching sound which seemed to reverberate in the silence.

The parrot bent its neck, and — rubbed its beak on the perch. Sergey almost laughed. Then he caught the first expulsion of breath, half choked and gasped, as he saw the parrot lunge forward swiftly, take the finger with a snapping motion in its beak, and bite downward.

More shocking than any scream was the silence of the prisoner. The parrot had bitten him to the bone. He behaved as though he had not felt it. Such a relief, this stab of pain, from the slow torture of suspense, so welcome the knowledge of his doom after its uncertainty, that the bird's bite, though meaning death, was like a douche of cold water, reviving his manhood.

"*Belogvardeyetz!*" croaked the parrot, back on its perch with one strong wingbeat.

"He never makes a mistake," exclaimed the Baba Papagai, and gabbled formally: "Citizen Nikitin, this court finds you guilty of counter-revolution. Take him out!" she shouted. "To the cellar with the White Guard servant of dogs!"

The prisoner was the calmest man in the church. Erect, his head back, with a firm step he allowed his guards to lead him across the front of the altar toward the rear entrance. As he passed the table of the Baba Papagai, she leaned forward and feasted her bulging eyes on his drawn white face. The prisoner looked her back squarely, sneering as though in sympathy with the snarl on her face, and with a contemptuous cry, "Parrot justice!" yielded to the urging of his guards as they dragged him through the door.

The Baba Papagai put on the cloth cap. Her upper lip clamped down in savage determination. "Tonight, at eleven o'clock, we'll hear the next case on the docket." She gathered up her papers, shoved the table aside, and strode down the aisle.

Sergey had intended to slip out before the others, but he had not reckoned with this abrupt ending of the session. Before he could move, the Baba Papagai was in the aisle, scrutinizing the faces as she passed. With every step she took, his courage waned. By the time she reached his bench, he was cowering in his seat. He felt numb in the clutch of a nightmare. Those eyes were the eyes of a Kelpie, that monster from the stories of Scotland his father had told him long ago, half-bull, half-demon, but shaped like a man, which dwelt at the bottom of the deep lochs of the Highlands and on nights when the full moon shone, appeared beside the skiffs of unwary boatmen and dragged them down to death. The Kelpie, he recollected shudderingly, had just such bulging eyes, such shaggy eyebrows, such lineaments of hate.

Never before had Sergey known

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such anguish as when the Baba Papagai stopped beside him, turned and surveyed the church to satisfy herself no one had moved since she left her table, then, quite accidentally let fall her gaze on his small red head.

"Well, who are you, with your head of an imp from hell?"

This repetition of the phrase so fresh in his memory broke the spell sufficiently for him to stammer out: "I'm only a little boy."

"Whelp!" spat the Baba Papagai, and passed on through the door.

Running back to the prison as fast as he could, Sergey felt the movement of his legs in the sharp air send the blood tingling through his veins, and by the time he reached the house and paused to scrape the snow from his boots, he had shaken off his fears. He felt big with importance as he entered the hall and knew that he had news to tell. Marfoosha's face brought back the unaccustomed sense of depression. She was sitting at the table between her father and the American soldier, her head sunk on her breast.

The two men looked up eagerly when Sergey appeared, but Marfoosha never stirred.

"Well, what happened?" cried the commandant.

"It bit, all right," announced Sergey in a matter-of-fact tone.

The prison warden shoved his glass away from him, banged his fist on the table: "I knew it."

Marfoosha lifted her head as if just awakened. Catching Sergey by the arm she drew him to her and whispered: "Tell us about it. All about it."

Sergey began. They listened as though their lives depended upon every word.

"And then," he went on, "she said she would hold court again tonight."

"Tonight?" all three broke out. "Tonight? It was to be tomorrow."

"You mean," gasped Marfoosha, "that — that — he is to be tried tonight?"

"That's what she said," responded Sergey.

Marfoosha threw herself on the floor, clasping her lover round the knees. "They shan't. They shan't!" she screamed.

His face was white and his lip trembled a little as he patted her head, repeating tenderly: "*Nichevo, nichevo, nichevo.*" It was the only Russian word he could pronounce without a trace of accent, the universal "Never mind" or "What's the use," of Slavic fatalism.

But his caressing hand froze when the commandant mumbled thickly: "They shoot you through the back of the head."

Marfoosha sobbed aloud.

"Yes, that's how they do it," insisted her father, tipsy with indignation. "They take you down to the cellar of the church and just as you pass the threshold they shoot you in the back of the head."

A moan from his daughter checked him suddenly, diverting his anger. "And you! You damned imp!" he

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yelled at Sergey. "What are you going to do? I thought you could find something?"

Marfoosha's weary "Let him alone" roused her father to a higher pitch.

"No, I won't let him alone. What good has he done? You damned imp! It was Dedushka who swore you amounted to something. The old man is getting crazier every day. Suppose you get along over there and let him know how worthless you are. Get on. Get out of here." Unable to vent his feelings otherwise, the commandant staggered to his feet and advanced with threatening fist toward the boy.

Sergey retreated sullenly. He was halfway down the steps when the commandant rushed out and yelled at him: "What time will it be?"

"Eleven o'clock tonight."

It was already past five o'clock and pitch-dark. He found his way through the town by the glow from the windows and afterward by instinct, like a young wild animal, accurately retraced the path of the evening before. His thoughts were whirling about the awful eyes of the Baba Papagai. The longer he thought, the more convinced he became that she was a Kelpie. His father's stories came back more vividly. Surely there was some detail he had forgotten. Yes, something about a charm or talisman against the monster. His father certainly had spoken of a charm. But that was all so long ago. To Sergey a whole lifetime seemed to have passed since then, and he groped back in his memory as an old man strives to recall his youth. He tried to concentrate his mind on the talisman, but each time it slipped away from him. "Like a watermelon seed slipping through your fingers," thought Sergey.

The simile struck a vein of association. The talisman was some kind of seed. "Tree berries! The berries of the mountain ash! That's what Father said was good for Kelpies. Woven in a cross."

But something else too, when there were no ash berries. Something still better, he reflected. The feeling that the door was only halfway open persisted. He was walking head down, so absorbed in the effort to remember that he went past the old man's boxcar without noticing it. Suddenly he stopped, sniffed the air like a hound on the trail, turned, saw the boxcar and ran toward it.

"I've found it!" shouted Sergey, leaping up and seizing the astonished old man by the hand. "I've found it!" he repeated, dancing in excitement. "We can save him now."

"In the name of the Holy Saints Boris and Gleb!" ejaculated the grandfather. "What is it you've found to make you jump like a flea on a frog's back?"

Sergey hardly heard him. His eyes were roving round the cabin.

"Ha! There, in the corner!" He heaved a deep sigh of relief. "The charm!" he exclaimed. "The charm, little grandfather, the charm to defeat the Kelpie."

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"And now perhaps you'll tell me what a Kelpie is, and why you're behaving like an idiot," grunted the old man sarcastically as he dipped a bowl of stew and placed it smoking hot before the boy. How good it smelled! Sergey recollected his stomach so keenly that he forgot his excitement. Over the stew he related the day's events, dwelling on his conviction that the Baba Papagai was a Kelpie.

"Very probable. Very probable." The old man nodded affirmatively.

"Whew, I'm late, terribly late. Maybe he's already gone."

Sergey jumped for the door, pulling his fur cap over his ears, and with a shrill "Goodbye!" bolted into the night.

He took the steps at the prison door in one jump, landed on his heels, skidded and fell in a heap at the feet of the surprised sentry.

"Gangway! Lemme in."

"Who, then, is holding you?" said the sentry as Sergey jerked open the door and rushed into the hall.

It was empty.

Sergey stopped, frozen with the fear that he had come too late to give his talisman to the American. His feet lagged as he crossed the hall, but voices in a room beyond quickened his step. He pushed his head cautiously through the door, entered quickly, closed it with a bang and jumped forward. Marfoosha and the American were sitting on the floor, talking so earnestly that they scarcely heeded Sergey's presence.

Sergey brought his two hands down thwack on the backs of Marfoosha and her lover.

"Come! Quick! I've found it — the charm — to save you. Where's the kitchen? Come with me.

"Quick! Here!" Sergey grabbed the American with his right hand and was digging in his pocket with the other when the Red Guard brusquely shoved him aside with: "Out of the way now, and enough of this monkey business. Can't help it. Orders is orders. Come along."

Marfoosha threw her arms around her lover's neck. The Red Guard frowned with embarrassment but paused. Sergey turned his back as though in sympathy with the feelings of the lovers, but in the moment of their embrace he pulled from his pocket a little white object, and clenching it tightly in his fist whirled and cried:

"Well, comrade, shake hands. Come on, be a man — don't stand there like a dummy."

The American looked down at him, smiled, released Marfoosha and took Sergey's small paw.

"Goodbye," he said.

"A talisman. Keep it in your hand until the last minute," whispered Sergey. "It's magic. Hold it tight, dig your nails into it, and you can't lose." Then aloud: "Goodbye, comrade."

The Baba Papagai believed in ceremony of a kind.

As eleven boomed from the tower, the Baba Papagai's huge bulk moved

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down the aisle towards the altar. Behind her two soldiers, each carrying a lighted candle a yard long and thick as a man's arm. Behind them a third, holding aloft the golden banner, with the parrot's cage, wrapped in a white napkin, swinging beneath it like a censer. Then the clerk of the court with measured step. Then two guards with fixed bayonets. Then the prisoner, head high, shoulders squared, marching slow as a funeral parade. Finally, two more guards.

The Baba Papagai strode to the table before the altar; turned, surveyed the audience, seated herself and folded her arms. The man with the ecclesiastical banner placed it neatly in its socket, and with a nervous gesture flicked off the cover from the cage. The light of the two candles fell on the parrot. It blinked, ruffled its feathers, stretched its neck and croaked: "*Gotova!*" ("Ready")

The Baba Papagai bared her yellow fangs.

"*Gotova!* Yes, we are ready, my little dove! Comrades," said the Baba Papagai, pushing back her chair, crossing her legs and shoving her cap to the back of her head. "Comrades, we are here tonight to try a foreign dog who was sent to impose the might of his capitalist masters upon the workers and peasants of the Russian Socialist Federation of Soviet Republics. He comes from the country which above all would like to see the first Workers and Peasants Government once more enslaved by tyrants. An American! It means a dog."

The word "dog" aroused the parrot. It squawked: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

The woman's maniac laughter shocked the echoes of the church.

"Never wrong! Never wrong! My little dove never mistakes them," she cried. "Now, you dog of a White Guard, speak now for yourself. Say why you, a foreigner, dared invade our country."

The American answered boldly in his childish Russian:

"*Yah gavaryou ochen malo po Russky. No yah ne vinovat.*"

"Oh, you speak very little Russian but you're not guilty. You know enough to say that. And you've nothing more to say?" The Baba Papagai rose to her feet, placed her cap before her on the table and leaned forward. "Nothing more? Or have you some excuse?"

"*Nichevo,*" retorted the prisoner coolly. It was the one word he pronounced perfectly in Russian.

Her face darkened with fury.

"Dog!" The word penetrated to the farthest corners of the building.

Immediately the parrot responded: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

"The little comrade has spoken. Let him judge the case."

The two guards beside the American grasped him by the arms. He needed no urging. "*Nichevo,*" he said again, to tell them he was not afraid to play his part without coercion.

He walked straight up to the cage. Sergey held his breath. The boy's glance shifted rapidly from the parrot's cage to the Baba Papagai, still

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leaning forward on the table, her Kelpie's eyes a-goggle at her victim.

"Hell!" said the American aloud. The foreign word rang out defiantly. "Hell!" he repeated again, and stuck his forefinger into the cage.

The parrot lifted its wings. Every spectator — save perhaps one, for Sergey's Scotch heart beat stoutly in his breast — knew that it would strike. It lifted its wings, squawked, teetered on its perch, lowered its beak close to the proffered finger, then half flew, half hopped across the cage, beating the air, screeching atrociously: "*Konchala! Konchala!*" ("Finished! Finished!")

"Well? What do you say to that, old girl?" asked the American in English, grinning at the Baba Papagai.

Her eyes were glazed. She crashed her fist upon the table.

"Dog! Dog!" she roared.

"*Belogvardeyetz! Belogvardeyetz!*" weakly echoed the parrot.

"Once more, you dog!" commanded the Baba Papagai.

"As often as you like," answered the American, and put his finger again through the bars.

This time the parrot never pretended to investigate. It cowered at the bottom of the cage, buried its beak in its breast feathers, and only when the Baba Papagai shrieked "Dog!" at the top of her voice did it respond with a low croak: "*Belogvardeyetz!*"

"What's the hour?" The Baba Papagai turned to the clerk beside her. Trembling, he pulled from beneath his sheepskin coat a massive gold repeater, said, "Fifteen minutes to midnight," and returned the former property of the Prince Rashkushin to his pocket.

"Release the prisoner. He is acquitted." The parrot woman kicked aside her table and strode down the aisle. For the sake of this one victim she could not disavow her favorite instrument of terror.

This time Sergey Sergeyitch McTavish sat up straight in his seat and stared at her as she passed him. The moment she disappeared, he ran forward and grasped the American by the hand.

"A Kelpie! I told you! A Kelpie!" he yelled crazily. "My father was right — my father knew."

Indifferent to the buzz of congratulations and the eager hands outstretched to them, the young soldier swung Sergey aloft.

"You're all right, kid," he shouted in English. "You may be cuckoo, but you're there with the goods." Then in Russian: "What was it, *malchik?* I kept it in my hand until the last, but afterward I dropped it. How did you do it?"

His mouth close to the other's ear, Sergey murmured: "Take a sniff at your finger."

The American gave a loud yell, then checked himself.

"Yes," whispered Sergey, "garlic — that's the charm against Kelpies."

The two set off at a trot for the home of Marfoosha.

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Remember Peter Godfrey's perfectly wonderful riddle story, "The Lady and the Dragon," which won a special award in EQMM's Fifth Annual Contest? If you read the story, you probably remember it: the last line was unforgettable.

In introducing "The Lady and the Dragon," we called it "a parcel of paradoxes . . . an almost unclassifiable story." Our comments set the author's mind working. Could he, consciously and deliberately, write a story that is absolutely unclassifiable, or that merits an entirely new classification? Well, Mr. Godfrey confesses that he did not succeed — at least, not on his first attempt; but in the process he conceived the idea of using a multiplicity of the different types of the detective story, mixing them well, and popping the result into what Mr. Godfrey calls "the testing oven at EQMM."

So, here we have another prize-winning tale by Peter Godfrey, and for the life of him, the author doesn't know how to classify his own story. It cannot be fully described as a whodunit, or a whydunit, or a howdunit — for the simple reason that the tale has in it solid elements of all three 'tec types. It is also an impossible-crime story, or to put it another way, a miracle problem. Similarly, it can be designated as a sealed-room story — in this instance, a sealed-egg; and from a completely different point of view it can be labeled a broken-alibi story. It even has, the author contends, attributes of the inverted detective story.

If Mr. Godfrey had in mind subtly persuading us *to classify his story, he has failed. We pass. If pressed, however, we would forego all classifications and categories, and simply offer you what can be termed, without code or catalogue, an interesting story . . . .*

THE NEWTONIAN EGG

by PETER GODFREY

"THE DYING MAN," SAID HAL Brooke, "ate a hearty wedding breakfast."

On the other side of the room Kurtz, also with a tray on his knees, sneered. He said: "It's a funny thing about this disease. You can feel on top of the world one minute, and be knocking at the pearly gates the next. Even if you are getting married this afternoon, you could pop off just as well today as any other day." He grinned. "Maybe the excitement will make it even more likely. You

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know, I've been thinking about it for the last few minutes — trying to imagine which would be the most appropriate moment for you to kick the bucket. At first I thought during the ceremony . . . but there's a much better time."

"Yes?"

"Yes. In that fraction of a second before final consummation. Although, of course, almost any time today would still be poetically satisfying."

Brooke said softly: "You love me very much, don't you, Kurtzie?"

In the third bed, Winton waved his bandaged wrists, moaned and cursed. "Shut up," he said. "Shut up. We've got to die — we know that. But why keep talking about it? Why talk?"

"Winton," said Kurtz, "doesn't like talk. Oh, no. He prefers action — only he bungles his actions. When you managed to steal that scalpel, Winton, why didn't you just cut your throat and have done with it? Didn't you realize the nurses would be bound to discover your cut wrists before anything serious happened? Or did you just go through the motions, with some half-witted idea of gaining sympathy?"

"I should have used it on you," said Winton. "It would have stopped your infernal talking."

"Minds," said Brooke. "Funny things. Look at yours, Kurtz. A good brain, education and experience behind it, a capacity to think constructively when you choose. Only, you don't choose. You prefer to twist and distort into the meanest, most personal, ugliest channels you can conceive. A real mental prostitution. And then there's you, Winton — no real mind at all, only a few cockeyed emotions. No intelligence. Just a sort of blind stretching forward to satisfy the need of the moment."

Winton said: "What do you know about what goes on in my mind? What about the scalpel? Could you have got one, Mr. Genius?"

"If I wanted one," said Brooke, "I'd get one. And if I wanted to use it, I'd use it properly. I don't know how you got it, Winton, but I'm pretty certain it was by accident. And I'm not running down your lack of mind through malice. Oh, no. You're the luckiest of the three of us. When you go, you've got so very little to lose."

Winton cursed. He repeated: "How do you know what I think about?"

"I don't — except by inference. But let's find out. Take this boiled egg, for instance. Here, let me hold it in my hand. Now, look at it, and tell me what you think."

As Winton hesitated, Kurtz laughed from his bed. "Come on, Winton. I want to hear this, too."

"It's just . . . an egg," said Winton. "Laid by a hen, on a farm somewhere. And boiled here in the kitchen."

"And brought to me, warm and white and unbroken," said Brooke. "I know. That's how your mind works. But this egg tells my mind a lot more."

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"Like what, for instance?"

"Oh, many things. . . . It reminds me, for instance, of Isaac Newton, of his discoveries — the law of gravitation — and from there, of space and time and the universe, of Einstein and relativity. And it reminds me, on the other side, of pre-Newtonian science, of the theories of transmutation of metals; and I see that Newton is the link, and the two sides of the chain meet again today in the atom physicists."

"You're talking nonsense," said Winton. "What has an egg to do with Isaac Newton?"

"Ah, so you haven't even heard *that* story? Let me tell it to you — maybe it will provide some consolation for you. It shows how even great minds have their moments of aberration. . . . You see, a friend once came into Newton's kitchen, and there was the savant holding an egg in the palm of his hand — like this — staring at it in utter concentration — and on the stove next to him his watch boiled merrily in a pot of water."

Again, Kurtz laughed. Winton looked at Brooke uncertainly. He said: "You're still talking in the air. . . ."

But Brooke was warming to his theme. "The human mind," he said. "What a magnificent mechanism! Properly applied, it creates miracles. Nothing, basically, is impossible —"

"Except us." In his triumph Winton spat. "What about us? All the best brains in science, all working on us, and they can't help. None of them can help."

Kurtz said: "All the same, Brooke's right. One day they'll find a cure. Maybe the day after you die, Winton. Or the day before. That's why your scalpel idea was so completely and utterly foolish."

"They still need data," said Brooke. "Sorry, I should have been more explicit. I should have said nothing is basically impossible when all the facts are known. Do you ever read detective stories?"

Winton said: "Trash."

"Not all of them. I'm thinking of a particular story, written by a man who's now dead — Jacques Futrelle. A magnificent story called *The Problem of Cell 13*. Futrelle's hero is a man he calls The Thinking Machine. He claimed that if he were locked in the condemned cell under the usual conditions, with nothing except his own magnificent mental equipment, he would *think* himself out. And he did, Winton, he did."

"In a story, yes. Anything's possible in a story."

"Logic is the common denominator between good fiction and life. That's why I say your scalpel idea was clumsy. There are so many easier, more ingenious methods. Now, if I wanted to get rid of myself —"

"No," said Kurtz. "I don't like suicide — not even used as an example. Rather, assume that you were planning to kill Winton. Or, better still, that I wanted to kill you. Much truer to life."

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"All right, we'll say you want to kill me. And that you use your mind in the way you ought to use it. You'll pick something commonplace and apparently innocent, like — like this egg here. Yes, the egg's a good idea. First, you lay your hands on some virulent poison — if Winton could find a scalpel, you most certainly could find some poison. And you would work out a method of getting the poison inside the unbroken shell of the egg —"

Winton said: "That's an impossibility, Brooke, a complete impossibility."

"Is it? That's what they said about The Thinking Machine and his guarded cell. And there's another angle, too — also from detective fiction. In a book called *The Three Coffins* one of the modern masters of detective fiction, John Dickson Carr, had his chief character give a lecture on how to commit murder in a hermetically sealed room. If I remember correctly, there were three main methods, each with dozens of variations. And all perfectly possible — remember that, Winton. And if a murderer can get into a sealed room, commit a murder and disappear, he could also get into a sealed egg. The same principles apply. And the egg could be brought to me, like this one, through the normal innocent channels, and I could crack the shell, as I'm doing now, scoop up the egg — yes, do all the natural things, absolutely unsuspecting, put the spoon in my mouth, and die."

He put the spoonful of egg into his mouth.

And died.

"Mr. le Roux," said Nurse Metter; and then: "No, I can't call you that. Hal has told me so much about you. I'm going to call you Rolf, and you must call me Doris. I can't go on calling my husband's best friend by his surname, can I?"

"Definitely not." The brown eyes twinkled, and behind the beard the full lips curved in a smile. "I would have liked to have come earlier, but Hal's letter didn't give me much time. Still, I suppose I'll have a chance for a chat with him before the ceremony?"

"Of course. The padre won't get here until after lunch, and you can see Hal as soon as he's finished his breakfast. He's in Ward 3, just down the passage. You can follow me in when I go to fetch the trays. They'll be ringing for me any second now."

Rolf thought of the letter from Hal in his pocket. And he thought: "Nice girl. If only Hal could live his normal span. . . ."

The girl must have seen something of his mental images. "I'm afraid I'm just a little bit nervous," she said. "You see, it's not every day —"

She turned as the buzzer behind her sounded, and Rolf noticed that the numeral "3" had dropped in the indicator. But the buzzer kept on, urgently, insistently.

"Oh," said Doris Metter. "Something's wrong!"

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She whirled past Rolf, moved in long-limbed strides down the passage. He came after her. Just inside the door of Ward 3 she paused momentarily, clutching her throat with one hand.

The contorted body of Hal Brooke sprawled in a half-sitting position on the bed, knees drawn up and twisted as though from a violent spasm. There was a thin line of froth on the lips.

Doris Metter said "Oh" again. She ran forward, stumbled over the tray and crockery on the floor, struggled back to her feet, threw herself sobbing on the breast of the corpse in the bed.

Rolf le Roux said to the man in the bed opposite: "Keep ringing the bell." He put his hands on Doris Metter's shoulders, and gently drew her away. While doing so, he caught the elusive smell, bent over the body to make more certain. When he straightened again, his face was very grave.

Another nurse came to the door of the Ward, hesitated only long enough to call out down the passage, and hurried forward. She caught the sobbing figure of Doris Metter in her arms, and started to lead her gently from the room. They were only halfway to the door when the young doctor came in, took in the significance of the scene, went to the living before the dead. He spoke quickly, consolingly; gave crisp instructions to the other nurse. Only then he came to look at the body.

He said to Rolf: "You're Mr. le Roux, of course. Hal told me all about you. I'm Randall." And then: "This must have been a bad shock for you. Tragic, under the circumstances. But you must remember it could be expected to happen at any time."

Rolf's eyes were hard and implacable. "Smell his lips," he said.

Randall looked at him for a long second, then bent over the body. His expression also changed. He said: "I see."

The man in the bed opposite shook his head, as though to clear it. "Poison," he said conversationally. "And it was suicide, you know, even though it probably doesn't look like it. Brooke was talking about suicide just before it happened."

The third patient sat up in his bed, waved a bandaged wrist. "You're a liar, Kurtz. He was talking about you killing him."

"Here," said Randall, suspiciously, "what's all this?"

"I'll tell you," said Kurtz. "I think I remember almost every word of the conversation. And don't interrupt until I've finished, Winton. You can say all you want to, then." Rapidly he sketched out the conversation. "Is that right?"

"That's right," said Winton, grudgingly.

Dr. Randall grimly got down on hands and knees, sniffed over the shattered egg that was lying on the floor, looked up, and nodded.

"And the egg," said Rolf, "was opened by Brooke? He cracked the

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shell, scooped up some of the egg, and ate? Is that all that happened?"

"That's all," said Winton.

Randall started to say, "There's no way of getting potassium cyanide into an unbroken —" He stopped, because Kurtz was shaking with laughter.

"Poor old Winton and his literal mind," said Kurtz. "How Brooke would have loved to hear him now! Of course something else happened, but something so casual and commonplace that Winton would never think of mentioning it."

"And that was?"

"Brooke cracked the egg, and took the spoonful to his mouth, and he was talking all the time. But between these two actions he did something else. He took the salt-cellar from the cruet, poured a quantity on the surface of the egg, and mixed it in with the spoon. And only then did he take his mouthful."

"You mean," asked Randall, "the salt —?" But while he was still speaking Rolf was already on the floor, searching among the debris of the fallen tray.

"There it is," said Winton, "still lying on the bed."

Randall picked it up off the counterpane, unscrewed the top, and held the body of the container to his nose. He took one of the white grains, smelled it again to make sure, and touched it with his tongue. "No," he said, "this is ordinary table salt."

"So," said Kurtz, and looked quizzically at Rolf le Roux.

But Rolf said, almost to himself, "The timing. . . ." and then, "How long did it take? I mean everything — from the moment the nurse left the breakfast trays to the moment she came back in answer to your ring?"

"Four or five minutes," said Kurtz.

"No," said Winton. "Longer than that. Say eight or nine."

"And all the time you both stayed in bed? You did not move?"

"I stayed in bed," said Winton. "But I don't know about Kurtz. I was too busy looking at Brooke to notice what Kurtz did."

Kurtz smiled. "I stayed in bed, too." He looked at Rolf. "You know, Brooke was a real admirer of yours. He advertised you — the great Sherlock of the Cape Town C.I.D. It's rather interesting to watch you now — standing there, baffled over Newton's egg."

"Not Newton's egg," said Rolf. "Newton's apple."

Except for the corpse, he was alone in the Ward. Kurtz and Winton had been searched and taken out. Dr. Randall had gone down the passage to telephone the police post at Bossiesfontein.

He pulled the letter out of his pocket and read it again.

Dear Rolf,

If you ask me how I am, I will tell you that I am dying very nicely, thank you. Which is in direct contrast to the two other unfortunates

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in this ward. We all three are under sentence of death with intestinal T.B.; but, speaking strictly for myself, once you get accustomed to the feeling of general malaise and the knowledge that any given morning — if you will forgive the Irishism — you may wake up to find yourself dead, you can find some compensations, even in the valley of the shadow.

In my own case, I am delighted to find that my wits have never been so sharp and crystal-clear and — now hold on to your malodorous pipe! — I am also getting married.

Don't get a shock — it's all perfectly feasible and natural. I've checked with the quacks here, and read up all the authorities myself just to make sure, and this is certain — the disease, in the form I have it, is neither contagious nor infectious nor transmissible by heredity. Only fatal. And think of this, Rolf — I can still partially cheat death if I have a child.

And I'm *going* to have that child. It's all arranged. One of the doctors here by the name of Randall pulled strings — particularly decent of him because I think he's got a soft spot for Doris himself. (Oh, yes, of course, I should have told you — the girl is a nurse here, Doris Metter.) Anyway, he's done everything possible. After the ceremony, we move straight into a private Ward. Doris has been examined, too, and is 100% healthy.

I know this all sounds like cold-blooded stud arrangements, but I may not have the time to waste on tact and social graces. I want a child, and I want a healthy child — one that has a chance to make better use of its life than I have.

Doris not only understands, she shares my urge. Last night she told me why. You see, she had an elder brother she worshipped, and he also died of an incurable disease — hæmophilia — at the age of 14. I suppose there is basically some sort of Freudian identification in her mind between me and her brother, and she feels that in our child she'll have me and her brother too. But that's not entirely the whole story for either of us. You see, oldtimer, we're really in love.

The ceremony is on Tuesday — and don't you dare send me your congratulations by letter. I want to hear them verbally, direct from the labyrinths of your beard. If you catch a train from Cape Town on Sunday night, you should be here on the morning of the marriage, the lucky day.

More when I see you in the flesh —

Hal

Not the letter of a suicide, thought Rolf. And yet, in three days much could happen. The half-life he was living, the twisted motives . . .

To decide definitely, there were many other things to be found out. Access to poisons, for instance. Opportunity, generally. More facts were needed, new angles. Sometimes, looked at from a different direction, the impossible became the obvious.

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. . . and he owed it to Hal to make absolutely sure.

Rolf found Dr. Randall sitting at the desk in the office along the passage. He asked, "Have you contacted the police?"

"No," said Randall. "I was . . . well, to tell the truth, I was waiting for you. I wanted to have a talk."

"Yes?"

"I . . . Look here, *must* I call the police? Won't you forget about the poison — let me sign a death certificate? What good will it do with the police prying around, badgering Dor — Nurse Metter? What for? Isn't it enough that Hal's dead, without him also being branded a suicide? Isn't it really better my way?"

Rolf said: "Maybe it would be . . . easier. But what if it was not suicide? Would you want his murderer to go scot-free?"

Randall was deeply upset. "Don't forget, he was a doomed man in any case. And who could have killed him? Kurtz? Winton? Also doomed men. Is it worthwhile putting all this further torture on an innocent girl?"

"Hal Brooke was my friend," said Rolf. He sat for a moment, with his eyes far away. "For his sake, and if I were *sure* . . . but I first have to be sure, you understand. We can wait two hours, and after that I promise you I will make up my mind."

"Thank you, Mr. le Roux. And if I can help in any way —?"

"First, I'd like to know where the poison could have come from."

"In all probability from this room. From that closet over there."

"Locked?"

"Well, yes — but actually the lock slips if you give a sharp jerk on the door. We should have had it repaired, of course, only . . . well, just been neglected."

Rolf was staring at the serried bottles and jars on the shelf. He located the tiny potassium cyanide container, and scratched his beard contemplatively. He said: "One thing I don't understand . . . there are poisons here, yes, but there are also harmless drugs. Isn't it unusual to keep them together?"

"Not if you realize that, being so far from town, we dispense most of our own medicines, and that this room is our dispensary."

"Even so, isn't potassium cyanide rather a strange drug to have here?"

"No. It's a common drug in a T.B. hospital. It's used in making up a very effective cough mixture. A tiny quantity, of course — the basis is a minim two drops to eight ounces of other ingredients."

"I see. And so it is perfectly possible for one of the patients to walk in here, if he knows about the room, jerk open the locked cupboard, and remove a quantity of poison? Could it be done unseen?"

"Definitely. It was from this room, we think, that Winton stole the scalpel with which he tried to commit suicide. But it would have to be done late at night. During the day, if I'm not here, there's a nurse on duty."

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"Have you actually noticed that anything here was interfered with at any time?"

"No. I can honestly say I've *seen* nothing —"

"But?"

"Well, when I came and sat down here just now, I had a feeling that there was something wrong, something somehow out of place. Just a *vague* feeling. . . ."

She lay on the bed in the darkened room, and if she had been weeping the atmosphere of tragedy would have seemed less.

"There's nothing to talk about," she said. "It's just . . . horrible. And I don't think you would understand."

"Perhaps I would," said Rolf. "He was my friend, you know. And he wrote me all about the situation. Let *me* talk, rather. You can tell me whether I am right. . . . You see, I know what he wanted — how he felt about having a child. And how you felt. And it seems to me that, even though you loved him, the horror is not so much Hal dying. You knew it would happen, and you were prepared for it. No, the horror in your mind is that the child will never be born, that Hal will not live again in your child, that you have nothing of him left. . . ."

She started to cry — hoarse, racking sobs. "Yes," she said, "yes." And then: "I couldn't even give him his last wish, Rolf — not even his last wish." She heaved convulsively in her sobbing. "I had a brother once —" and then gave herself over to a paroxysm of grief. After a while she quieted. "He wanted a child so badly. That's the irony of it. So badly that . . . and his face, when he heard from Dr. Randall that I had been examined, that there was nothing wrong with me, that I could have his child, a healthy child. . . . That was all he had left in life, Rolf."

He waited for her, then he asked: "When you brought him his tray in the morning, was there anything about it that was *different?*"

"No," she said. "It was his usual breakfast. A soft-boiled egg and coffee."

"And the others in the ward — did they also have boiled eggs?"

"No. Kurtz's egg was fried, and Winton had an omelette."

"Was Hal's egg in any way cracked?"

"No. It was just an egg. I gave the order in the kitchen, and a few minutes later took the three trays in."

"And after that?"

"I had more trays to carry to other Wards. And then I heard that you were here, and I came to speak to you. You know . . . the rest."

"Yes. But tell me this — from the time you took Hal his tray to the moment we went back to the Ward, how long do you think it was?"

"A long time," she said. "At least twenty-five minutes."

Rolf le Roux came back to the dispensary, sat down at the desk, and

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put his head in his hands. Motive, he thought, that was the key . . . the motive for suicide — or murder. And he thought again of that last conversation in the Ward, the dying man's lecture on Jacques Futrelle and John Dickson Carr. A sealed egg, yes, and Isaac Newton . . . looking at the egg while the watch boiled . . . the law of gravitation. . . .

Because his thoughts were traveling in circles he opened his eyes, emptied his mind, and looked around the room.

And looking, he felt what the doctor had experienced before him, the vague unease that a pattern was wrong, that something was out of position. And right in front of his eyes, on the bookshelf above the desk, he saw what it was:

The huge volumes of the *British Encyclopædia of Medical Practice.* Volumes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 6, 8 — volumes 7, 6. One out of place. Which?

The index of volume 7 told him nothing. He turned to volume 6. Gout, granuloma, guinea-worm disease, hæmatemesis, hæmatoporphyrinuria, hæmaturia, hæmophilia, haem — Hæmophilia. He remembered Hal's letter.

Page 123. Definition: An hereditary disease, only affecting males. Prognosis: grave. A fatal illness, and generally fatal in childhood. Females cannot have it, but they do transmit it to male offspring. *And Doris' brother had died of hæmophilia.* That meant her father had it. And if she had a *male* child . . .

Here was a motive. Yes, for suicide. If Hal, with his searching curiosity had crept in here last night, had looked at the book — and someone had obviously looked at the book — how would he have reacted? The poison closet so handy . . . but where would he keep it? What would he use as a container? Would he, with his tidy mind, have destroyed himself without warning Doris of the peril of her blood?

And besides, it was a motive for murder too. This doctor, in love with Doris, fond of Hal . . . Suppose he only heard last night that her brother had died of the disease. Suppose he came here to check the truth. And he knew about Hal's urge for the child, and Doris'. . . . Might he not have resolved to kill to save her future misery? He had been anxious enough to sign a death certificate. . . .

Or could it be something else, something apart from this, some motive pointing the finger at Kurtz or Winton?

The truth. . . .

He saw it. And the room whirled.

Isaac Newton, he thought. How it all came back to him. The talk about the egg . . . and then the proof that Kurtz had actually named the murder weapon. The saltcellar. Because if a man took salt from a cruet stand, when finished he would most likely replace the cellar in the cruet. Especially if he were eating off the limited surface of a tray. Or he would put it on the tray. And in his death parox-

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ysms, if the cruet, the tray, everything fell to the floor, then the saltcellar would also fall. Like Newton's apple, obeying the law of gravitation. And if the saltcellar were found on the bed, then someone must have put it there. Or, rather, put an *innocent* saltcellar on the bed —

After gaining possession of the poisoned one.

And then there was the final irrefutable psychological proof: the perception of time.

Newton and his egg again. A subtlety — the great man's mind wandering into absent-minded reverie, because although he was staring at what he thought was his watch, he wasn't really seeing it. His mind was wandering because he knew that if he concentrated on his watch *the egg would seem to take longer to boil.*

Kurtz said four or five minutes; Winton said eight or nine. But Doris Metter thought it was twenty-five minutes. *Because she had been waiting for it to happen.*

And Rolf saw her again, in the cold light of his mind, stumble over the tray on the floor, rise to her feet, weep on the breast of the corpse. And the actions formed two clear patterns. Picking up the poisoned saltcellar, putting down the innocent one.

But he saw also another image. He saw her, last night, the night before her wedding day, standing in the dispensary, picking up the medical book on a curious impulse, reading, and having her whole world collapse in a few lines. And he saw into her mind, too, into the torment and chaos, crystallizing in the soul-tearing logic of her resolution. In his ears again he heard her voice, bubbling through her tears: "I couldn't even give him his last wish, Rolf — not even his last wish."

Rolf le Roux stood up, slowly and heavily, and he walked along the corridor until he met Dr. Randall, and he said: "I have made a mistake. You may sign the death certificate."

Note:

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EQMM's DETECTIVE DIRECTORY

edited by ROBERT P. MILLS

THE WAY SOME PEOPLE DIE *by JOHN ROSS MACDONALD* (KNOPF, $2.50)	". . . topflight hard-boiled mystery . . . unforced brilliance of style and profound social commentary." (LGO)	"John Macdonald can write really well . . . rare freshness and originality." (HT)
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Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine rounds up the judgment of reviewers across the country. The key on the right gives sources.

". . . probably his best to date — and thereby automatically the top hardboiled novel of the year." (AB)	". . . derivation from Chandler here, but . . . honest, being a part of the genre, not a surface copy." (DBH)	
". . . emotions which have all the validity of a misunderstanding between tenor and soprano in an operetta." (AB)	"Suspenseful and interesting . . . but the actual mystery confusing . . . Practised hand." (KS)	
"The story . . . is contrived; its climax dependent upon coincidence . . . shocking from a writer of Miss Armstrong's caliber." (DBH)	"Miss A's touch slipped on this one though you'll probably want to read. Somewhat tedious." (KS)	
". . . certainly has not been surpassed by any of her previous fine novels . . . Such a richness!" (DBH)	"Intensely real and interesting . . . Suspense beautifully integrated . . . A master." (KS)	
"Both writing and plotting evince intelligence, ingenuity, and psychological plausibility." (AB)	"Intelligent, convincing tension. Stylistic skill, authentic local color . . ." (KS)	
"The story's premise . . . strong . . . The situation's development . . . skillfully handled." (AB)	"Slick as celluloid . . . Expertly tautened action and style." (KS)	
". . . grand fun . . . fine frenzied nonsense . . . agreeably absurd." (AB)	"Delightfully screwy, casually plausible . . . Style has tension, wit, humanity." (KS)	
"some . . . loose plotting and easy cheapness . . . still a great deal of exciting plot-counterplot . . ." (AB)	"Arbitrary hodge-podge . . . rudimentary thought process and evasively cliché verbalisms." (KS)	

KEY TO REVIEW SOURCES

AB: *Anthony Boucher in The New York Times*

DBH: *Dorothy B. Hughes in The Los Angeles Daily News*

LGO: *Lenore Glen Offord in The San Francisco Chronicle*

KS: *Kathleen Sproul in The Saturday Review of Literature*

HT: *Unsigned review in The New York Herald Tribune*

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Rafael Sabatini died on February 13, 1950, at the age of 75, in the town of Adelboden, Switzerland — a town he loved so deeply that he visited it annually for the last fifty years of his life. Whether Sabatini worked in Adelboden, or merely vacationed there, we do not know; but surely the town must have played an important part in his life, and its people, its buildings, its atmosphere must have crept into many of his books . . .

One of the most eminent historical novelists of the Twentieth Century, Mr. Sabatini is known to have done exhaustive research for all his stories. It is interesting to note, however, that he never visited the scene of one of his tales until after *he had finished the writing. If this seems coach-before-the-horse procedure, it is nevertheless brilliantly logical: for what Mr. Sabatini was afraid of was that the modern appearance of his story-locales might blur, or even obliterate, the old, authentic background which research had built up in his mind.*

Now, we ask you to sample one of the typically swashbuckling tales in which you will meet, to quote from Mr. Sabatini's obituary, "lusty heroes with a talent for exceedingly efficient swordplay" — to say nothing of an even trickier talent for roguery and blackmail . . .

THE OPEN DOOR

by RAFAEL SABATINI

"THE OPEN DOOR," SAYS THE CASTILIAN proverb, "will tempt a saint," which is only the Spanish way of saying that opportunity makes the thief.

It is not pretended that Florimond Souverain de la Galette was a saint, or that only exceptional temptation would lead him to seize an opportunity of profit, whatever the moral considerations involved. Nor did the discerning suppose that he had any right to that too high-sounding name of his, or that it was anything more than one of the theatrical properties calculated to create the romantic background which he conceived proper to his profession. It was of a piece with his favourite description of himself:

"I live by the sword."

This being translated into vulgar terms meant no more than that he was a fencing-master. The sword by which he lived was buttoned and padded at the point, otherwise he

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would not have lived by it long. For, in fact, he was an indifferent performer; and if he drove even a precarious trade in the exercise of his art, this was because a great vogue of swordsmanship had been created in the declining lustres of the Eighteenth Century by the *Art des Armes*, that revolutionary and widely-read treatise on fencing by the great Parisian master, Guillaume Danet.

Those were days in which the name of Guillaume Danet was on every lip. His methods were discussed wherever gentlemen assembled, and fantastic tales were told of his wizardry with the blade.

It was Florimond's pretence that he had studied under Danet. The truth was that he had learnt what swordsmanship he knew in a third-rate Paris fencing-school, where, in addition to sweeping up the floor and furbishing the foils, it had been his function to instruct beginners in the various guards. He had read Guillaume Danet's famous treatise assiduously, and, having scraped together a few louis, the little rascal had gone off to Rheims to set up as a master-at-arms. Over his door he hung a shield, bearing the conventional but in his case unauthorized and inaccurate legend, "*Maître en fait d'Armes des Académies de S.M. le Roi.*" And he appropriated some of the lustre of the great name of Danet by unblushingly proclaiming himself the favourite pupil of that master.

That magical name accomplished all that Florimond could have hoped, but only until the young gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who had flocked so eagerly to his academy, discovered the falsehood of his pretensions to teach an art of which he himself possessed little more than the rudiments. After that, his only pupils were a few aspiring younger members of the bourgeoisie, and Florimond fell upon esurient days.

His fortunes were touching their nadir when he became aware of that open door which is said to tempt the saint. He made the discovery, by purest chance, at the inn of the *Sucking Calf — Le Veau Qui Tète —* where it was his evening habit to sit over a game of écarté with Philibert the notary, Desjardins the wine merchant, and Fleury the apothecary.

Into that hostelry, on an evening of Spring, came a gaudy, overdressed young man in yellow and silver, with cheap lace at throat and wrist, and a ribbon wherever he could stick one, who had just descended from the Paris stagecoach.

He was the son of a mercer named Desfresnes, of the Rue St. Antoine, and he had lately inherited from his father a modest fortune with which he was setting out upon his travels, proposing to play in the world the careless, glittering rôle of a man of fashion. With his cheap finery he had put on the insolent airs which he had observed in men of the class of which he aspired to be accounted a member.

There may have been a dozen patrons in the common-room of the *Sucking Calf* when he swaggered in,

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calling, so as to be heard by all, for the best supper, the best wine, the best room, and the best of anything else the house could supply. In the hush produced by his loud commands, Florimond turned to look him over with an eye of increasing scorn. For Florimond, who, for a time at least, had rubbed shoulders with members of the lesser nobility, knew a gentleman when he saw one.

The day had been a lean one, the cards that evening were not going well for him, and the moment's inattention caused by the noisy advent of this pinchbeck gallant betrayed him into a disadvantageous discard. It was enough to sour his humour.

The newcomer, who had announced his name of Desfresnes in such a way as to make it sound like de Fresnes, conceived it in his rôle that no pretty woman should be overlooked; and little Pâquotte of the *Sucking Calf*, with her merry eyes, red lips, plump bosom and tip-tilted nose, suddenly found the young gentleman's arm round her waist and his finger under her chin.

"My dear, I vow to Heaven that you're too dainty a pullet for a provincial inn. I profess to Heaven you'ld adorn the Palais Royal. You'ld find your fortune there at Février's." With princely condescension he added: "I vow to Heaven you shall wait on me, little one." And in the best manner, as he supposed, of the Palais Royal rake, he placed a kiss, which none could have described as chaste, upon her fresh young lips.

Whether his spuriousness deceived her or not, and whatever may have been her feelings, Pâquotte knew her duties too well to make a fuss. With a laugh she slipped from his detaining arm, and moved off to prepare a table. Monsieur Desfresnes was following when Florimond's unkindly comment on a note of mimicry arrested him.

"I vow to Heaven we are to be edified by this canary. He talks of the Palais Royal, of Février's. I vow to Heaven he will have been a waiter there."

The words were bad enough, but carried to every corner of the room by Florimond's thin, piercing voice they aroused a general laugh.

Monsieur Desfresnes stood arrested by this brutal shattering of his proud persuasion that he was dazzling these provincials. He lost his head.

A dark flush on his lumpy countenance, he turned back to the card-players' table. He wore a sword, and, leaning his hand upon the hilt, he thrust it up behind him like the angry tail of a roaring captain. And his tone matched the attitude in truculence. He ransacked his wits for words that should sear and scorch. But, failing to discover them in the little time at his disposal, he contented himself with being haughtily direct.

"Did you talk at me, sir?"

Florimond put down his cards, and swung round on his chair. His glance took in this haughty challenger, from the curls of his cheap wig to the buckles (of gilded brass) on his shoes, and his mouth tightened with malice.

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"Now that I behold you better I perceive how little that was worth while."

The intransigence of the phrase should have warned Desfresnes that here was a man who, for all his slight build and the rusty black of his garments, might be dangerous. But, like the fool he was, he allowed himself to be swept forward by his gust of passion. He slapped Florimond's face.

"Let that teach you to mend your manners."

Consternation was followed by hubbub.

Florimond knocked over his chair in his haste to rise, and his three friends rose with him to restrain him. In what he did, however, he was as restrained as he was deadly.

"The lesson calls, I think, for payment. Monsieur Fleury, do me the honour to arrange a meeting for eight o'clock tomorrow morning in the Pré-aux-Chêvres. The length of my blade is twenty-five inches." He bowed with cold formality. "Not to embarrass you, monsieur, I will withdraw."

He marched out stiff with dignity, leaving consternation in the bosom of the Parisian who found himself so abruptly with a duel on his hands. Reminding himself, however, that he had to deal with a benighted provincial, for whom such elementary swordsmanship as he possessed should be more than enough, Desfresnes recovered his confidence, and sustained the ruffler's part.

"I vow to Heaven, sirs, that your friend is in a hurry to get himself killed."

Florimond's three associates regarded him with disconcerting pity. Then Fleury, the apothecary, answered him.

"If he doesn't kill you, sir, you will owe it either to his kindness of heart or to his fear of the consequences. The law is not lenient with a fencing-master, even when he has been provoked."

"A what?"

The three men sighed as one. Philibert shook his big head.

"Ah! You would not know, of course. A fatal ignorance, young sir. The gentleman you have so unpardonably struck is Monsieur Florimond Souverain de la Galette, master-at-arms of the King's Academies."

Desfresnes suddenly felt that the dinner eaten at Epernay had disagreed with him. He stared wide-eyed and pallid, the jauntiness gone out of him like air from a pricked balloon.

"A fencing-master! But — Sacredname! — one does not fight a fencing-master!"

"It is not prudent," the lean wine-merchant agreed. "But then neither is it prudent to slap a fencing-master's face."

Fleury, however, showed himself brisk and practical. "I trust, sir, that you have a friend to make the necessary arrangements with me?"

"But . . . but . . ." Monsieur Desfresnes broke down, and finally demanded: "Where does he live?"

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It was a boy from the inn who conducted him on foot to the shabby house behind the Cathedral where Florimond had his being and his academy.

Florimond's greeting was not encouraging. His scowl was forbidding.

"Monsieur, this is most irregular."

Desfresnes stammered in a nervous flurry. "Mu . . . Monsieur, in ordinary circumstances . . . But these circumstances are . . . quite extraordinary. I did not know that you were a fencing-master."

"Ah! Indeed! I am to wear a placard on my breast, for the warning of impertinent cockerels."

But no insult could inflame anew the young Parisian. "It is impossible that I should meet you."

"Of course, if you prefer that I cane you in the streets . . ."

"Monsieur, I have come to apologize."

"Apologize?" Florimond laughed, and to Desfresnes it was the most dreadful sound that he had ever heard. "But where do you come from, then? From Egypt, or Persia, or perhaps China? For all that I know, it may be possible in some of these places to slap a gentleman's face and avoid the consequences by an apology. But in France, monsieur, we arrange it differently, as you may have heard. For even in the Palais Royal, even at Février's, these things are understood."

The young man abased himself in intercessions. Florimond, with no other end in view but completely to humble the upstart, did not yet choose to be mollified.

"You fetched the blood to my cheek just now. I shall fetch yours to your shirt in the morning. Then we shall be quits, and honour will be satisfied."

Desfresnes was in despair. He thought of flight. But his baggage was at the inn, which, moreover, was the post-house. Surreptitious departure would be impossible. His wandering, fearful eyes observed that the furniture of Florimond's room was shabby, that Florimond, whilst spruce to the casual glance, was threadbare to a close inspection. And so he came by the inspiration that was, in the sequel, to make a rogue of Florimond.

"If I were to offer compensation for the injury, monsieur?"

"Compensation?" Florimond's eye was terrible.

"You live by the sword. You give lessons for money. Why should you not satisfy your honour by . . . by . . ." He halted foolishly.

"By what, monsieur?"

Desfresnes took a flying leap at his goal. "By ten louis."

"Leave my house, sir!" roared the incorruptible Florimond.

"Fifteen louis," gasped Desfresnes, putting up his hands as a shield against the other's wrath.

But the fierceness had gone out of the fencing-master's eyes. His lips twitched.

"Fifteen louis! Bah! Name of a name, it costs more than that to smack my face, young sir."

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"Twenty, then," cried Desfresnes more hopefully.

Florimond became suddenly thoughtful. He stroked his chin. Here was a queer, unexpected shaping of events. Twenty louis was as much as he now could earn in a year. For half the sum he would gladly allow himself to be slapped on both cheeks and any other part of his body that might tempt an assailant. He cleared his throat.

"You understand, of course, that in these matters there can be no question of compensation. Honour is not for sale. But a fine, now: that might be different. After all, I do not want your blood. By a fine of, say, twenty louis, I might consider that I had sufficiently mulcted your temerity. Yes, all things considered, I think I might."

Desfresnes lost not an instant, lest Florimond should change his mind. He whipped out a fat purse, bled himself and departed.

And from that hour Florimond was a changed man.

An unsuspected source of easy profit had suddenly revealed itself. It was the open door that tempts even the saint. Florimond strangled a conscience that had never been robust, and crossed the threshold.

Twice, in the month that followed, he gave such provocation to travellers resting at the *Sucking Calf* that on each occasion a challenge resulted. True, the meetings provoked never followed. If Florimond, hitherto so gentle and unobtrusive, had suddenly, to the dismay of his three card-playing friends, become truculent and aggressive, at least, to their consolation, he was always to be mollified by a visit from his intended opponent. Commonly the visit was suggested by Fleury. Of the nature of the mollification which Florimond exacted, his honest friends had no suspicion. From the fact that he now spent money more freely, they simply assumed that the affairs of his academy were improving. Nor did these good, dull men draw any inference from the circumstance that his clothes assumed a character of extreme bourgeois simplicity, and that he abandoned the wearing of a sword, which, in the past, had been an integral part of his apparel.

Their suspicions might have been aroused if Florimond's victims had walked less readily into his snares. Shrewd in his judgment of likely subjects, he spread his net only for the obviously self-sufficient numskull, and he never forced the pace, always leaving it for the victim to commit the extreme provocation.

Subjects such as these were, after all, by no means common. It is certain that at no time did the average run higher than one a fortnight, and with this, Florimond was at first abundantly content. Greed, however, increasing with prosperity, and fostered by the ease with which it could be satisfied, he grew less cautious.

Yet all went smoothly for him until one Autumn evening, when a moon-faced, quiet-mannered man in

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the plainest of tie-wigs, his sober brown suit almost suggesting a plain livery, descended from a post chaise at the *Sucking Calf*, and mildly ordered himself supper, a bottle of wine and a bed for the night.

From his table in the usual corner Florimond observed him narrowly, and judged him a timid simpleton of the merchant class, yet a man of substance, since he travelled in a chaise and not by the stage. He was an ideal victim, save that his unobtrusiveness opened no avenue of approach.

Demure and self-effacing, he ate his supper, and Florimond began to fear that at any moment now he might call for his candle, and so escape. Some departure from ordinary tactics became necessary.

Florimond loaded a pipe, rose and crossed the room in quest of a light.

The stranger, having supped, had slewed his chair round and was sitting at his ease, a little unbuttoned and somnolent, his legs stretched before him. Florimond trod upon the fellow's foot; after that he stood glaring into the moon-face that was raised in a plaintive stare. Thus for a long moment. Then:

"I am waiting, monsieur," said Florimond.

"Faith! So am I!" said Moon-face. "You trod on my foot, monsieur."

"Let it teach you not to sprawl as if the inn belonged to you."

The man sat up. "There was plenty of room to pass, monsieur," he protested, but so mildly plaintive as merely to advertise his timidity.

Florimond had recourse to stronger measures. "You are, it seems, not only a clumsy lout, but also a mannerless one. I might have pitched into the fire, yet you have not even the grace to offer your excuses."

"You . . . you are amazingly uncivil," the other remonstrated. The round face grew pink, and a wrinkle appeared at the base of the nose.

"If you don't like my tone, you have your remedy, monsieur," snapped Florimond.

Rounder grew the eyes in that bland countenance. "I wonder if you are deliberately seeking to provoke me."

Florimond laughed. "Should I waste my time? I know a poltroon when I see one."

"Now that really is going too far." The stranger was obviously and deeply perturbed. "Oh, yes. Much too far. I do not think I could be expected to suffer that." He rose from his chair at last, and called across to a group at a neighbouring table. "You there, messieurs! I take you to witness of the gross provocation I have received from this ill-mannered bully, and . . ."

Florimond's piercing voice interrupted him.

"Must I box your ears before you will cease your insults?"

"Oh, no, monsieur. So much will not be necessary." He sighed mournfully, in a reluctance almost comical. "If you will send a friend to me we will settle the details."

It came so unexpectedly that, for a moment, Florimond was almost out

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of countenance. Then he brought his heels together, bowed stiffly from the waist, and stalked off to request of Fleury the usual service. After that, pursuing the tactics long since perfected for these occasions, he departed from the inn. As the unvarying routine of the matter had taught him to expect, it was not long before he was followed. Himself, as usual, he opened to the knock, and with his usual air of indignant surprise admitted the moon-faced gentleman. As usual the victim displayed all the signs of distress proper to these occasions. His nervousness made him falter and stammer.

"Mu . . . Monsieur, I realize that this is most irregular. Bu . . . but the fact is . . . I realize that I have been too hasty. It is necessary that I should explain that . . . that a meeting between us is, after all, quite . . . quite impossible."

He paused there, prematurely as it seemed, and as if fascinated by the wicked smile that was laying bare the swordsman's dog-tooth. Into that pause came the sarcastic answer that had done duty on every occasion since Desfresnes':

"Ah! I am to wear a placard on my breast, so as to warn the impertinent that I am a fencing-master."

But the phrase which hitherto had proved so disconcerting proved now the very opposite. The stranger's expression completely changed. It became so quickened by surprise and relief that it entirely lost its foolish vacuity.

"A fencing-master! You are a fencing-master? Oh, but that makes a great difference." The enlivened glance swept round the room, observed its bareness, the lines chalked on the floor, the trophies of foils, plastrons and masks adorning the walls. The man drew himself up. His figure seemed to acquire an access of virility. He actually smiled. "And this, of course, is your school. I see. I see. In that case everything arranges itself."

Heels together, he bowed with the proper stiffness. "Forgive the needless intrusion. We meet, then, at eight o'clock in the Pré-aux-Chêvres." He turned to depart.

For the first time in one of these affairs it was Florimond who was disconcerted. He set a detaining hand upon the other's shoulder.

"A moment, Monsieur le mystérieux. What the devil do you mean by 'everything arranges itself'?"

"Just that." The eyes in the moon-face twinkled with amusement. "For me, as for you, monsieur, a duel with an ordinary civilian would be a serious matter. If there should be an accident the consequences might be grave. You see, I am, myself, a fencing-master. But since you are of the fraternity there are no grounds whatever for my apprehensions."

A sensation of cold began to creep up Florimond's spine. As a swordsman he knew that whilst among asses he might be a lion, among lions he was certainly an ass. He looked more closely at this stranger in whom he

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had been so mistaken; he looked beyond the round placidity of that pallid countenance, and observed that the man was moderately tall, well-knit, of a good length of arm and an exceptionally well-turned leg.

"You are, yourself, a fencing-master?" he echoed, and his stare was foolish.

"Even of some little celebrity," was the answer in a tone of mild deprecation. "My name is Danet."

"Danet?" Florimond's voice cracked on the name. "Not . . . not Guillaume Danet?"

Again the stranger bowed, that stiff bow from the waist so suggestive of the swordsman. "The same. Very much at your service. I see that you have heard of me. You may even have read my little treatise. It has made some noise in the world. Until to-morrow, then, at eight o'clock, my dear confrère."

"But . . . a moment, mon maître!"

"Yes?" The other paused, his eyebrows raised.

"I . . . I did not know . . ."

He heard his own phrase cast in his teeth.

"Am I to wear the name Guillaume Danet on a placard on my breast as a warning to impertinent little provincial fencing-masters?"

"But to meet you, mon maitre . . . It is not possible. You cannot wish it. It would be my ruin."

"That will not matter since you will probably not survive it."

Wide-eyed, pallid, Florimond stared at this opponent, the very mildness of whose aspect had now become so terrible. Already he had the sensation of a foot or so of cold steel in his vitals. "I will apo . . . pologize, mon maître."

"Apologize! What poltroonery! You provoke, wantonly you insult the man you suppose to be incapable of defending himself, and you imagine that an apology in private and in secret will adjust the matter. You are caught in your own trap, I think. You had better be making your soul, Monsieur de la Galette. Good night!"

"Wait! Ah, wait! If now . . . if I were to compensate you . . ."

"Compensate me? I don't understand."

"If twenty-five louis . . ."

"You miserable cutthroat, do you dare to offer me money? Not for fifty louis would I forgo the satisfaction of dealing with you as you deserve. To bleed you of a hundred louis might perhaps be to punish you enough. But—"

"I will pay it! Master, I will pay it!" Frantically, Florimond made an offer that would beggar him of almost every louis wrung from the victims of his dishonest practices.

Round grew the eyes and the mouth in the round face that confronted him. "A hundred louis!" The great master's tone reminded Florimond that every man has his price. Slowly Monsieur Danet seemed to resolve. Slowly, with a shrug of the shoulders, he spoke. "After all, why not? The object, when all is said, is to

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punish your temerity. Since you are penitent, to kill you, or even to maim you, might be too much. I am a man of heart, I hope. It is not in my nature to be inclement. I will take your hundred louis, and bestow them on the poor of Paris."

It was of no consolation to Florimond to assure himself that the poor of Paris would never see a sou of the money. With a heart of lead he counted out his hoard, and found to his dismay that ninety-eight louis was his total fortune. But now the great Danet showed himself not only clement, but magnanimous. Far from exacting the last obol, he actually left Florimond three louis for his immediate needs.

You conceive, however, that this generosity did not mitigate the fencing-master's bitter chagrin to see the fruits of months of crafty labour swept away. The only solace he found for his mortification was the reflection that what he had done once he could do again. There would be no lack of pigeons still to be plucked. In future, however, he must proceed with greater caution and not trust too readily to a mild and simple exterior.

So, putting a brave face on the matter, he resumed his habits, and each evening at the *Sucking Calf* he sat like a spider in its web, waiting for the unwary fly to blunder in.

They were on the threshold of winter, a season of diminished travelling, and for the best part of a fortnight Florimond's vigilance went unrewarded. Then one evening a traveller arrived whose entrance was like a gust of wind, whose voice, summoning the landlord, was sharp with authority.

The vintner bustled forward, and Florimond could scarcely believe his ears.

"Landlord, I am seeking here in Rheims a rascally fencing-master, who is a disgrace to his calling, and who goes by the flamboyant name of Florimond Souverain de la Galette. Can you tell me at what address he may be found?"

It was Florimond, himself, who answered.

With the feeling that the gods were casting a timely gift into his very lap, he sprang from his chair. He seemed to spin round in the act of leaping, and landed, heels together, in a rectangle before the inquirer.

"He is here."

He was confronted by a tall, lithe gentleman elegantly dressed in black, who regarded him sternly out of an aquiline countenance. A cold stern voice rang upon the awed stillness of the room.

"You are that scoundrel, are you?"

At least a dozen pairs of eyes were turned in pity upon this rash stranger who came thus to skewer himself, as it were, upon the fencing-master's sword. A dozen pairs of ears listened attentively to his further words.

"Another in my place might account himself your debtor. For I have to thank you for four pupils who have sought me in the course of the past two months. Each of them had

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been craftily entangled by you in a quarrel, so identical in detail as to betray its calculated nature. Each of them, so as to keep a whole skin, paid you in blackmail either ten or fifteen louis. Before the last of them came to me for fencing lessons I had already begun to understand the rascal trade you are driving. I have since assured myself of it, and for the honour of the profession of arms, of which I am a jealous guardian, I account it my duty to put an end to it."

"Who are you?"

"You have the right to know. I am Guillaume Danet, master-at-arms of the King's Academies."

"You? You, Guillaume Danet?" Goggle-eyed, Florimond regarded him; and then his glance was drawn beyond this tall stranger to a man who entered at that moment, carrying a valise: a man in sober brown that looked like a plain livery; a man with a round, bland, pallid moon-face, hatefully well known to Florimond.

"Then who the devil may that be, that fellow behind you?"

The stranger looked over his shoulder.

"That? That is my valet. The man I sent here a couple of weeks ago, to verify my conclusions about you."

And then this poor, rascally Florimond committed his worst blunder. Like all rogues, judging the world to be peopled by rogues having kindred aims, he uttered a snarling laugh.

"He did more than that. He anticipated you. You are behind the fair, Monsieur Danet."

"Behind the fair?"

"That scoundrel had a hundred louis from me. I have absolutely nothing left."

"I see. He played your own game, did he? And you do me the honour to suppose me equally base?"

He laughed, not pleasantly. He raised his cane, and for months thereafter they told the tale in Rheims of the caning administered by the great Danet to Florimond Souverain de la Galette, a caning which made an end of his career as a master-at-arms, at least in that part of France.

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Do you remember Mr. Linley, the detective in Lord Dunsany's "The Two Bottles of Relish"? Well, here is a brand-new Mr. Linley story, never before published anywhere in the world. . . . As you read this tale of pure deduction, you will be reminded of those marvelous opening scenes in most of the Sherlock Holmes stories — those magnificent curtain-raisers in which the Master takes up a simple object (like a watch or a walking-stick), examines it almost casually, and then, to the utter amazement of Dr. Watson (and the reader), reels off a staggering series of deductions; except that in this case Mr. Linley examines an ordinary crossword puzzle and then, with all the sharpness and shrewdness of Holmes himself, narrows a field of seventy-five suspects to the one and only possible murderer. . . . Shades of Sherlock, here is a classic criminological coup in the grandest of all 'tec traditions!

As Smithers, that admirable specimen of a modern Watson, says: "It was all pure magic to me." That's what Lord Dunsany's detective stories are — pure magic, written with charm and a delicate aura of fable; you can almost see Lord Dunsany sitting in his study, working wonders with words, in a patch of Irish sunlight . . .

A SIMPLE MATTER OF DEDUCTION

by LORD DUNSANY

"YES," SAID SMITHERS, "MR. LINley is a wonderful man."

Smithers was being interviewed by a man from *The Daily Rumour*, who would far sooner have interviewed Linley. But Linley would not talk about himself, and so they had gone to Smithers.

"I understand that you lived in the same flat with him," said the journalist.

"That's right," said Smithers. "I did for a couple of years."

"And what was the most remarkable case in which he took part?" asked the interviewer, a young man of the name of Ribbert.

"I couldn't say that," said Smithers. "I've seen so many of them."

"You've told us of some."

"Well, I have," said Smithers.

"Are there any that you haven't told us about?" asked Ribbert.

"Well, yes," said Smithers. "There was the case of Mr. Ebright, who was lured to an empty house by a telephone call, and there murdered. You could find an empty house before the war, if you looked for it; and this man had found his way in — through a

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window at the back, the police said — and had lured Mr. Ebright there somehow, and was waiting for him when he came. You may remember the case."

"I think I do," said the journalist.

"There were no clues in it," Smithers went on, "no clues at all; not what you would really call clues. And that was what brought the detective in charge of the case to Mr. Linley, and that is why you might call it one of his cleverest bits of work. The detective thought Mr. Linley might help him, because he was Inspector Ulton who had been helped by Mr. Linley before. I was there at the time, when Inspector Ulton came in, and after they'd said Howdydo, he says to Mr. Linley, 'There's a case with a certain amount of mystery about it, and we thought that you might perhaps have an idea that would help us. . . .' "

"What are the facts?" asks Mr. Linley.

"There are very few of them," says the Inspector. "It's a case of murder."

I was surprised to hear him say that, because it's a word that Inspector Ulton never seemed to like to use. But he used it this time. "He was killed with a hammer or some such object," Inspector Ulton says. "His skull was battered in, and the hammer, or whatever it was, had been cleaned on a bit of newspaper. The body wasn't found until two days later, so that the murderer got a good start. We know it was premeditated murder, not only because the dead man, Mr. Ebright, was lured there by a telephone call, but because there are no fingerprints except his in the whole house. And that means the murderer must have been wearing gloves all the time, even when he was doing a crossword puzzle, which is the only thing besides the sheet of bloody newspaper that had been left in the room in which the dead man was lying — a bare room in an unoccupied house in a little street near Sydenham."

"How do you know that it was the murderer who worked on the crossword puzzle?" asks Mr. Linley.

"Because he would have been doing it while he was waiting for the other man to come," says Inspector Ulton. "He must have got there first so as to let Mr. Ebright in."

"Yes, that is so," Mr. Linley says. "Could you let me see the puzzle?"

"It's only an ordinary one," says Inspector Ulton, "and all the letters are done in capitals, which give us no clue to his handwriting."

"Still, I would like to take a look."

And Inspector Ulton takes an envelope out of his pocket and pulls out a torn sheet of newspaper. "There it is," he says. "No fingerprints."

And there was the crossword puzzle, nearly all filled in.

"He must have waited for a long time for his victim," says Mr. Linley.

"We thought of that," says the Inspector. "But it didn't get us any further."

"I think the crossword puzzle will."

"The puzzle?" says the Inspector.

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"I don't know," says Mr. Linley. "Let me look at it."

And he looks at it for quite a long while. And then he says to Inspector Ulton, "Who did it?" Which seemed odd to me at the time. But he explained to me afterwards that they usually know at Scotland Yard who has committed a murder, but that what they want to know is how to prove it. But Inspector Ulton only says, "We don't know."

And then Mr. Linley asks, "What was the motive?"

"Ah," says Inspector Ulton, "if I could tell you that, we wouldn't need to trouble you. The motive would lead us to the man like a foot-track. But there's no motive and no clue, or none that has come our way."

And Mr. Linley goes on looking at the crossword puzzle, and Inspector Ulton says, "What do you make of it?"

"A friend of his," says Mr. Linley. Which was hardly the right word to use of somebody who had murdered him. But that was Mr. Linley's way of putting things.

"A friend?"

"Someone of his acquaintance," says Mr. Linley. "Or he couldn't have lured him into that deserted house."

But that was getting nobody any forrarder. For Inspector Ulton says, "We had thought of that, and had gone carefully over the list of all the people he knew. But the trouble is there are seventy-five of them. It would be one of those, as you say. But we can't very well put seventy-five men on trial."

"No," says Mr. Linley. "The dock couldn't hold them all."

But one could see that Inspector Ulton didn't think that very funny. And then Mr. Linley goes on. "But I think I can whittle them down a bit for you. To begin with, he has one of those new fountain pens that will write for weeks on end without refilling them. Not quite everybody has one. So that reduces your list by two or three. And then he would have sent it to be refilled about the time of the murder, which reduces it a good deal further."

I saw that he must have got that from the crossword puzzle. But after that it was all pure magic to me. For he goes on, "And I fancy he is a man who has a garden. I should say a fairly good one. And then he lives among chess players, though he doesn't play himself. And he is not without education, but was never at Eton or any similar school. And he has a gun and probably lives near a river or marshes."

"But wait a moment!" says Inspector Ulton. "How do you know all this?"

"And one thing more. He knows something about geology."

And all the time he was holding this bit of a sheet of paper in his hand and glancing now and then at the crossword puzzle. I couldn't make head or tail of it, and I don't think Inspector Ulton could either. And then Mr. Linley begins to explain. "You see, we

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begin with his seventy-five friends — because it isn't a casual burglar trying to rob him. A man doesn't go to meet a stranger like that with jewelry on him; or with money either, unless he is going to pay blackmail. And if he's going to pay blackmail, there's no need to murder him. No, it was one of your seventy-five. And you see the track of his pen?"

"Yes, I see that."

"And you see where it began to give out at the third word and could hardly manage the fourth? So he gave it up and went on with a pencil."

"Yes, I see that too."

"Well," says Mr. Linley, "there are words in a crossword puzzle that you get helped to by the letters of words you have done already, but the ones a man puts in first are the ones he knows. Now look at these, Inspector. The first two clues that he went for, which are not nearly the first in the crossword, are *Four of thirty-two* and *A kind of duck*. Those are the two that he picked to do first. And he puts in *Rooks* and *Shoveller*."

"Two birds," says the Inspector.

"No," says Mr. Linley, "the second is a bird, and the kind of bird not likely to be much known except among shooting men, and not always by them unless they live by muddy places in which the shoveller feeds. But rooks are what chess players call what the rest of us call castles. But though he is familiar with the correct name for them he doesn't play chess, for he has missed a very easy clue in five letters, *Starts on her own colour*. He would never hear chess players talking about that, because it is too elementary. But he can't be a chess player himself if he doesn't know that that refers to the Queen.

"And the third one he picks out," Mr. Linley goes on, "is *London's clays and gravels*. And he writes down *Eocene*. Which is quite right. But not everybody knows that, and it seems to make him a bit of a geologist. And then we come to his fourth effort, when his fountain pen gave its last gasp. The clue to that is *A classical splendor of the greenhouse*. And he gets that one at once, or at any rate it's his fourth choice, without any letters to help him. And that is why I say he is not without education, because he must have known something of Horace to get that word, and must know something about a glasshouse, and I should say a well-kept one, which makes him a bit of a gardener. *Amaryllis* is the word that he has written in."

"Why, that narrows it down a lot."

"Yes," says Mr. Linley. "We have now got a sporting friend of Mr. Ebright — if one can use the word friend, and if one can use the word sporting — who has probably quite a nice garden, and either a knowledge of geology or else he lives on those very clays and gravels and so knows their correct name, and also he is an educated man. Now among Mr. Ebright's educated friends several would have been at Eton, Winchester, or Harrow. But you can eliminate all of them because of a staring gap in this

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puzzle. Number 9 down, you see. It says *Long, short, short* (six letters). If he can't get that he has certainly never been at Eton. The simple answer is *Dactyl* — simple to anyone who has ever had to do Latin verses. And, indeed, you would get that much at a private school."

And I put in a suggestion then. "Mightn't Mr. Ebright have come in," I said, "and interrupted him?"

"He might have," said Mr. Linley, "but he had done all except three or four, and that Number 9 is one of the very first you would expect him to pick, if he knew anything about it, because it is so easy."

"Well, I think you have helped us wonderfully," says the Inspector.

"And I think we might follow his preferences a little further," goes on Mr. Linley, "though that will not be so easy. He was using a soft pencil and it was soon blunted, and I think we may allow him some knowledge of entomology, because he wrote this in while his pencil was still sharp, without the help of any letters from words that cross it, for they are more blurred and the pencil was pressed harder."

And Mr. Linley showed us the word *Vanessa*, and the clue to it, which was *The family of the peacock*.

"With a magnifying glass," went on Mr. Linley, "we might get some more. But perhaps you have enough when we have identified the murderer as a man acquainted with Mr. Ebright, who probably owns a garden, was educated, but not at Eton, knows geology, or lives on the London clays or gravels, is associated in some way with chess players and yet does not play, and has at one time or another collected butterflies. If you don't actually place him from that, it will at any rate remove suspicion from most of your seventy-five suspects."

"And sure enough it did. There weren't as many as half of them who had gardens. Only twenty of these turned out to have had a classical education and of those twenty, five had been at Eton. Of the fifteen remaining, only half a dozen knew anything of geology, and only two of those had ever collected butterflies, and one of them was found to have two nephews who often stayed with him on their vacations from Cambridge and were good chess players. And he did not play.

"All that was found out by Inspector Ulton and Scotland Yard, and it was a lot to find out. And they even found out that he had sent his pen to be refilled about the time Mr. Linley said. And they arrested their man, and he was tried. But the jury didn't feel that you could quite hang a man on the evidence of a crossword puzzle, and the verdict was 'Not Guilty.'"

"Then he is still going about!" said the journalist.

"Yes, when last I heard of him," said Smithers. "But I don't think there's any harm in him now. It was a near thing and it frightened him, and I don't think he'll try it again. You see, Mr. Linley nearly had him."

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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

It is curious how often history repeats itself almost exactly — yes, even literary history . . . You will recall the story we told you in Queen's Quorum how Gaston Leroux first named his famous detective Joseph Boitabille; how the journalist-sleuth appeared under that name for two installments of LE MYSTÈRE DE LA CHAMBRE JAUNE (THE MYSTERY OF THE YELLOW ROOM) *when that 'tec tour de force was first published as a serial in "L'Illustration"; how between the second and third installments a real-life journalist named Garmont threatened to sue Gaston Leroux because he, Garmont, claimed exclusive rights to the pseudonym of Boitabille, based on his use of that pen-name for fifteen years; and how, to avoid all controversy and confusion, Leroux began to designate his hero, starting in the third installment, by his* other *name — Rouletabille!*

We have just learned that this entire incident is merely a classic example of "history repeating itself." The Boitabille-Rouletabille contretemps occurred in Paris late in 1907. In the previous year, also in Paris, the identical situation took place — also involving a detective's name and also involving his first appearance in print. In 1906 Maurice Leblanc wrote the first Arsène Lupin story. It appeared in a then-new magazine called "Je Sais Tout." The great Arsène's name was originally Arsène Lopin. (It seems impossible to believe, doesn't it? After nearly half a century of familiarity with the name Lupin, our minds cannot accept any other spelling — no more than we could suddenly accept such famous detectives as Sherlock Helmes, Father Brawn, or Dr. Thornpyke — no more than your Editors could ever get used to a character named Ellery Quinn.) But to get back to our story: it seems there was a man whose true name was Arsène Lopin, and this actual person threatened to sue Leblanc. So, to avoid all controversy and confusion — setting the precedent for Leroux's action the following year — Leblanc simply designated his hero by his other name — Lupin!

This was not the end of Leblanc's nomenclatural difficulties. When he wrote ARSÈNE LUPIN VERSUS SHERLOCK HOLMES, *Conan Doyle refused to let Leblanc publish the book under that title. It appeared in France as* ARSÈNE LUPIN CONTRE HERLOCK SHOLMÈS. *And when the same book was issued in England, it had a whole flock of titles: first,* THE FAIR-HAIRED LADY; *then,* ARSÈNE LUPIN VERSUS HOLMLOCK SHEARS; *then,* THE ARREST OF ARSÈNE LUPIN. *And when the same book appeared in the*

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United States, the name-nemesis persisted: THE BLONDE LADY, ARSÈNE LUPIN VERSUS HERLOCK SHOLMES, *and finally,* THE CASE OF THE GOLDEN BLONDE. *But note that the name of Lupin's adversary was never quite the same.*

Did all this titular trouble inspire Leblanc to give Lupin a host of different names? Did Lupin become The Man of the Forty Names because Leblanc came to realize that there was safety in numbers? Who knows? — but it is an established fact that by the end of his career Lupin could boast more names than all his colleagues and competitors. For, among many others, Lupin was also known as Prince Rénine, Luis Perenna, Monsieur Lenormand, Jim Barnett, Paul Sernine, Horace Velmont, Cavaliere Floriani, Victor Hautin, Bernard d'Andrézy, Désiré Baudru, Jean d'Enneris, le Duc de Charmerace, etc., etc.

Now, meet the original, the one and only Arsène Lupin, in the eighteenth story of THE GOLDEN TWENTY — *the twenty best detective-crime short stories, by twenty different authors, as selected by a Blue Ribbon Panel of critics, connoisseurs, and constant readers. "The Red Silk Scarf" is the almost unanimous choice of aficionados as Lupin's greatest exploit, combining bloodhound business with pilfering pleasure, in the short-story medium.*

THE RED SILK SCARF

by MAURICE LEBLANC

ON LEAVING HIS HOUSE ONE MORNING at his usual early hour for going to the Law Courts, Chief Inspector Ganimard noticed the curious behavior of an individual who was walking along the Rue Pergolèse in front of him. Shabbily dressed and wearing a straw hat, though the day was the first of December, the man stooped at every thirty or forty yards to fasten his bootlace, or pick up his stick, or for some other reason. And, each time, he took a little piece of orange peel from his pocket and laid it stealthily on the curb of the pavement. It was probably a mere display of eccentricity, a childish amusement to which no one else would have paid attention; but Ganimard was one of those shrewd observers who are indifferent to nothing that strikes their eyes and who are never satisfied until they know the secret causes of things. He therefore began to follow the man.

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Now, at the moment when the fellow was turning to the right, into the Avenue de la Grande-Armée, the inspector caught him exchanging signals with a boy of twelve or thirteen, who was walking along the houses on the left-hand side. Twenty yards farther, the man stooped and turned up the bottom of his trousers legs. A bit of orange peel marked the place. At the same moment, the boy stopped and, with a piece of chalk, drew a white cross, surrounded by a circle, on the wall of the house next to him.

The two continued on their way. A minute later, a fresh halt. The strange individual picked up a pin and dropped a piece of orange peel; and the boy at once made a second cross on the wall and again drew a white circle round it.

"By Jove!" thought the chief inspector, with a grunt of satisfaction. "This is rather promising. . . . What on earth can those two merchants be plotting?"

The two "merchants" went down the Avenue Friedland and the Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, but nothing occurred that was worthy of special mention. The double performance was repeated at almost regular intervals and, so to speak, mechanically. Nevertheless, it was obvious, on the one hand, that the man with the orange peel did not do his part of the business until after he had picked out with a glance the house that was to be marked and, on the other hand, that the boy did not mark that particular house until after he had observed his companion's signal. It was certain, therefore, that there was an agreement between the two; and the proceedings presented no small interest in the chief inspector's eyes.

At the Place Beauveau the man hesitated. Then, apparently making up his mind, he twice turned up and twice turned down the bottom of his trousers legs. Hereupon, the boy sat down on the curb, opposite the sentry who was mounting guard outside the Ministry of the Interior, and marked the flagstone with two little crosses contained within two circles. The same ceremony was gone through a little farther on, when they reached the Elysée. Only, on the pavement where the President's sentry was marching up and down, there were three signs instead of two.

"Hang it all!" muttered Ganimard, pale with excitement and thinking, in spite of himself, of his inveterate enemy, Lupin, whose name came to his mind whenever a mysterious circumstance presented itself. "Hang it all, what does it mean?"

He was nearly collaring and questioning the two "merchants." But he was too clever to commit so gross a blunder. The man with the orange peel had now lit a cigarette; and the boy, also placing a cigarette end between his lips, had gone up to him, apparently with the object of asking for a light.

They exchanged a few words. Quick as thought, the boy handed his companion an object which looked — at least, so the inspector believed

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— like a revolver. They both bent over this object; and the man, standing with his face to the wall, put his hand six times in his pocket and made a movement as though he were loading a weapon.

As soon as this was done, they walked briskly to the Rue de Surène; and the inspector, who followed them as closely as he was able to, saw them enter the gateway of an old house of which all the shutters were closed, with the exception of those on the third or top floor.

He hurried in after them. At the end of the carriage entrance he saw a large courtyard, with a house painter's sign at the back and a staircase on the left.

He went up the stairs and, as soon as he reached the first floor, ran still faster, because he heard, right up at the top, a din as of a free fight.

When he came to the last landing he found the door open. He entered, listened for a second, caught the sound of a struggle, rushed to the room from which the sound appeared to proceed and remained standing on the threshold, very much out of breath and greatly surprised to see the man of the orange peel and the boy banging the floor with chairs.

At that moment a third person walked out of an adjoining room. It was a young man of twenty-eight or thirty, wearing a pair of short whiskers in addition to his moustache, spectacles, and a smoking jacket with an astrakhan collar and looking like a foreigner, a Russian.

"Good morning, Ganimard," he said. And turning to the two companions, "Thank you, my friends, and all my congratulations on the successful result."

He gave them a hundred-franc note, pushed them outside and shut both doors.

"I am sorry, old chap," he said to Ganimard. "I wanted to talk to you . . . wanted to talk to you badly."

He offered him his hand and, seeing that the inspector remained flabbergasted and that his face was still distorted with anger, he exclaimed:

"Why, you don't seem to understand! . . . And yet it's clear enough. . . . I wanted to see you particularly. . . . So what could I do?" And, pretending to reply to an objection, "No, no, old chap," he continued. "You're quite wrong. If I had written or telephoned, you would not have come . . . or else you would have come with a regiment. Now I wanted to see you all alone; and I thought the best thing was to send those two decent fellows to meet you, with orders to scatter bits of orange peel and draw crosses and circles, in short, to mark out your road to this place. . . . Why, you look quite bewildered! What is it? Perhaps you don't recognize me? Lupin. . . . Arsène Lupin. . . . Ransack your memory. . . . Doesn't the name remind you of anything?"

"You dirty scoundrel!" Ganimard snarled between his teeth.

Lupin seemed greatly distressed and, in an affectionate voice:

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"Are you vexed? Yes, I can see it in your eyes. . . . The Dugrival business, I suppose. I ought to have waited for you to come and take me in charge? . . . There now, the thought never occurred to me! I promise you, next time. . . ."

"You scum of the earth!" growled Ganimard.

"And I thinking I was giving you a treat! Upon my word, I did. I said to myself, 'That dear old Ganimard! We haven't met for an age. He'll simply rush at me when he sees me after so long!' "

Ganimard, who had not yet stirred a limb, seemed to be waking from his stupor. He looked all around him, looked at Lupin, visibly asked himself whether he would not do well to rush at him in reality and then, controlling himself, took hold of a chair and settled himself in it, as though he had suddenly made up his mind to listen to his enemy:

"Speak," he said. "And don't waste my time with any nonsense. I'm in a hurry."

"That's it," said Lupin, "let's talk. You can't imagine a quieter place than this. It's an old manor house, which once stood in the open country, and it belongs to the Duc de Rochelaure. The duke, who has never lived in it, lets this floor to me and the outhouses to a painter and decorator. I always keep up a few establishments of this kind: it's a sound, practical plan. Here, in spite of my looking like a Russian nobleman, I am M. Daubreuil, an ex-cabinet-minister. . . . You understand, I had to select a rather overstocked profession, so as not to attract attention. . . ."

"Do you think I care a hang about all this?" said Ganimard, interrupting him.

"Quite right, I'm wasting words and you're in a hurry. Forgive me. I shan't be long now. . . . Five minutes, that's all. . . . I'll start at once. . . . Have a cigar? No? Very well, no more will I."

He sat down also, drummed his fingers on the table, while thinking, and began in this fashion:

"On the 17th of October, 1599, on a warm and sunny autumn day . . . Do you follow me? . . . But, now that I come to think of it, is it really necessary to go back to the reign of Henry IV, and tell you all about the building of the Pont-Neuf? No, I don't suppose you are very well up in French history; and I should only end by muddling you. Suffice it, then, for you to know that, last night, at one o'clock in the morning, a boatman passing under the last arch of the Pont-Neuf aforesaid, along the left bank of the river, heard something drop into the front part of his barge. The thing had been flung from the bridge and its evident destination was the bottom of the Seine. The bargee's dog rushed forward, barking, and, when the man reached the end of his craft, he saw the animal worrying a piece of newspaper that had served to wrap up a number of objects. He took from the dog such of the contents as had not fallen into

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the water, went to his cabin and examined them carefully. The result struck him as interesting; and, as the man is connected with one of my friends, he very thoughtfully sent to let me know. This morning I was waked up and placed in possession of the facts and of the objects which the man had collected. Here they are."

He pointed to them, spread out on a table. There were, first of all, the torn pieces of a newspaper. Next came a large cut-glass inkstand, with a long piece of string fastened to the lid. There was a bit of broken glass and a sort of flexible cardboard, reduced to shreds. Lastly, there was a piece of bright scarlet silk, ending in a tassel of the same material and color.

"You see our exhibits, friend of my youth," said Lupin. "No doubt, the problem would be more easily solved if we had the other objects which went overboard owing to the stupidity of the dog. But it seems to me, all the same, that we ought to be able to manage, with a little reflection and intelligence. And those are just your great qualities. How does the business strike you?"

Ganimard did not move a muscle. He was willing to stand Lupin's chaff, but his dignity commanded him not to speak a single word in answer nor even to give a nod or shake of the head that might have been taken to express approval or criticism.

"I see that we are entirely of one mind," continued Lupin, without appearing to remark the chief inspector's silence. "And I can sum up the matter briefly, as told us by these exhibits. Yesterday evening, between nine and twelve o'clock, a showily dressed young woman was wounded with a knife and then caught round the throat and choked to death by a well-dressed gentleman, wearing a single eyeglass and interested in racing, with whom the aforesaid showily dressed young lady had been eating three meringues and a coffee éclair."

Lupin lit a cigarette and, taking Ganimard by the sleeve:

"Aha, that's up against you, Chief Inspector! You thought that, in the domain of police deductions, such feats as those were prohibited to outsiders! Wrong, sir! Lupin juggles with inferences and deductions for all the world like a detective in a novel. My proofs are dazzling and absolutely simple."

And, pointing to the objects one by one, as he demonstrated his statement, he resumed:

"I said, after nine o'clock yesterday evening. This scrap of newspaper bears yesterday's date, with the words, 'Evening edition.' Also, you will see here, pasted to the paper, a bit of one of those yellow wrappers in which the subscribers' copies are sent out. These copies are always delivered by the nine-o'clock post. Therefore, it was after nine o'clock. I said, a well-dressed man. Please observe that this tiny piece of glass has the round hole of a single eyeglass at one of the edges and that the single eyeglass is an essentially aristocratic article of wear. This well-dressed man walked into a

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pastry cook's shop. Here is the very thin cardboard, shaped like a box, and still showing a little of the cream of the meringues and éclairs which were packed in it in the usual way. Having got his parcel the gentleman with the eyeglass joined a young person whose eccentricity in the matter of dress is pretty clearly indicated by this bright red silk scarf. Having joined her, for some reason as yet unknown he first stabbed her with a knife and then strangled her with the help of this same scarf. Take your magnifying glass, Chief Inspector, and you will see, on the silk, stains of a darker red which are, here, the marks of a knife wiped on the scarf and, there, the marks of a hand, covered with blood, clutching the material. Having committed the murder, his next business is to leave no trace behind him. So he takes from his pocket, first, the newspaper to which he subscribes — a racing-paper, as you will see by glancing at the contents of this scrap; and you will have no difficulty in discovering the title — and, secondly, a cord, which, on inspection, turns out to be a length of whipcord. These two details prove — do they not? — that our man is interested in racing and that he himself rides. Next, he picks up the fragments of his eyeglass, the cord of which has been broken in the struggle. He takes a pair of scissors — observe the hacking of the scissors — and cuts off the stained part of the scarf, leaving the other end, no doubt, in his victim's clenched hands. He makes a ball of the confectioner's cardboard box. He also puts in certain things that would have betrayed him, such as the knife, which must have slipped into the Seine. He wraps everything in the newspaper, ties it with the cord and fastens this cut-glass inkstand to it, as a makeweight. Then he makes himself scarce. A little later, the parcel falls into the waterman's barge. And there you are. Oof, it's hot work! . . . What do you say to the story?"

He looked at Ganimard to see what impression his speech had produced on the inspector. Ganimard did not depart from his attitude of silence.

Lupin began to laugh:

"As a matter of fact, you're annoyed and surprised. But you're suspicious as well: 'Why should that confounded Lupin hand the business over to me,' say you, 'instead of keeping it for himself, hunting down the murderer and rifling his pockets, if there was a robbery?' The question is quite logical, of course. But — there is a 'but' — I have no time, you see. I am full up with work at the present moment: a burglary in London, another at Lausanne, an exchange of children at Marseilles, to say nothing of having to save a young girl who is at this moment shadowed by death. That's always the way: it never rains but it pours. So I said to myself, 'Suppose I handed the business over to my dear old Ganimard? Now that it is half solved for him, he is quite capable of succeeding. And what a service I shall be doing him! How

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magnificently he will be able to distinguish himself!' No sooner said than done. At eight o'clock in the morning, I sent the joker with the orange peel to meet you. You swallowed the bait; and you were here by nine, all on edge and eager for the fray."

Lupin rose from his chair. He went over to the inspector and, with his eyes on Ganimard's, said:

"That's all. You now know the whole story. Presently, you will know the victim: some ballet dancer, probably, some singer at a music hall. On the other hand, the chances are that the criminal lives near the Pont-Neuf, most likely on the left bank. Lastly, here are all the exhibits. I make you a present of them. Set to work. I shall only keep this end of the scarf. If ever you want to piece the scarf together, bring me the other end, the one which the police will find round the victim's neck. Bring it to me in four weeks from now to the day, that is to say, on the 29th of December, at ten o'clock in the morning. You can be sure of finding me here. And don't be afraid: this is all perfectly serious, friend of my youth; I swear it is. No humbug, honor bright. You can go straight ahead. Oh, by the way, when you arrest the fellow with the eyeglass, be a bit careful: he is left-handed! Good-by, old dear, and good luck to you!"

Lupin spun round on his heel, went to the door, opened it and disappeared before Ganimard had even thought of taking a decision. The inspector rushed after him, but at once found that the handle of the door, by some trick of mechanism which he did not know, refused to turn. It took him ten minutes to unscrew the lock and ten minutes more to unscrew the lock of the hall door. By the time that he had scrambled down the three flights of stairs, Ganimard had given up all hope of catching Arsène Lupin.

Besides, he was not thinking of it. Lupin inspired him with a queer, complex feeling, made up of fear, hatred, involuntary admiration and also the vague instinct that he, Ganimard, in spite of all his efforts, in spite of the persistency of his endeavors, would never get the better of this particular adversary. He pursued him from a sense of duty and pride, but with the continual dread of being taken in by that formidable hoaxer and flouted and fooled in the face of a public that was always only too willing to laugh at the chief inspector's mishaps.

This business of the red scarf, in particular, struck him as most suspicious. It was interesting, certainly, in more ways than one, but so very improbable! And Lupin's explanation, apparently so logical, would never stand the test of a severe examination!

"No," said Ganimard, "this is all swank: a parcel of suppositions and guesswork based upon nothing at all. I'm not to be caught with chaff."

When he reached the headquarters of police, at 36 Quai des Orfèvres,

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he had quite made up his mind to treat the incident as though it had never happened.

He went up to the Criminal Investigation Department. Here, one of his fellow inspectors said:

"Seen the chief?"

"No."

"He was asking for you just now."

"Oh, was he?"

"Yes, you had better go after him."

"Where?"

"To the Rue de Berne . . . there was a murder there last night."

"Oh! Who's the victim?"

"I don't know exactly . . . a music-hall singer, I believe."

Ganimard simply muttered: —

"By Jove!"

Twenty minutes later he stepped out of the underground railway station and made for the Rue de Berne.

The victim, who was known in the theatrical world by her stage name of Jenny Saphir, occupied a small flat on the second floor of one of the houses. A policeman took the chief inspector upstairs and showed him the way, through two sitting rooms, to a bedroom, where he found the magistrates in charge of the inquiry, together with the divisional surgeon and M. Dudouis, the head of the detective service.

Ganimard started at the first glance which he gave into the room. He saw, lying on a sofa, the corpse of a young woman whose hands clutched a strip of red silk! One of the shoulders, which appeared above the low-cut bodice, bore the marks of two wounds surrounded with clotted blood. The distorted and almost blackened features still bore an expression of frenzied terror.

The divisional surgeon, who had just finished his examination, said:

"My first conclusions are very clear. The victim was twice stabbed with a dagger and afterward strangled. The immediate cause of death was asphyxia."

"By Jove!" thought Ganimard again, remembering Lupin's words and the picture which he had drawn of the crime.

The examining magistrate objected:

"But the neck shows no discoloration."

"She may have been strangled with a napkin or a handkerchief," said the doctor.

"Most probably," said the chief detective, "with this silk scarf, which the victim was wearing and a piece of which remains, as though she had clung to it with her two hands to protect herself."

"But why does only that piece remain?" asked the magistrate. "What has become of the other?"

"The other may have been stained with blood and carried off by the murderer. You can plainly distinguish the hurried slashing of the scissors."

"By Jove!" said Ganimard, between his teeth, for the third time. "That brute of a Lupin saw everything without seeing a thing!"

"And what about the motive of the

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murder?" asked the magistrate. "The locks have been forced, the cupboards turned upside down. Have you anything to tell me, M. Dudouis?"

The chief of the detective service replied:

"I can at least suggest a supposition, derived from the statements made by the servant. The victim, who enjoyed a greater reputation on account of her looks than through her talent as a singer, went to Russia, two years ago, and brought back with her a magnificent sapphire, which she appears to have received from some person of importance at the court. Since then, she went by the name of Jenny Saphir and seems generally to have been very proud of that present, although, for prudence's sake, she never wore it. I daresay that we shall not be far out if we presume the theft of the sapphire to have been the cause of the crime."

"But did the maid know where the stone was?"

"No, nobody did. And the disorder of the room would tend to prove that the murderer did not know either."

"We will question the maid," said the examining magistrate.

M. Dudouis took the chief inspector aside and said:

"You're looking very old-fashioned, Ganimard. What's the matter? Do you suspect anything?"

"Nothing at all, chief."

"That's a pity. We could do with a bit of showy work in the department. This is one of a number of crimes, all of the same class, of which we have failed to discover the perpetrator. This time we want the criminal . . . and quickly!"

"A difficult job, chief."

"It's got to be done. Listen to me, Ganimard. According to what the maid says, Jenny Saphir led a very regular life. For a month past she was in the habit of frequently receiving visits, on her return from the music hall, that is to say, at about half past ten, from a man who would stay until midnight or so. 'He's a society man,' Jenny Saphir used to say, 'and he wants to marry me.' This society man took every precaution to avoid being seen, such as turning up his coat collar and lowering the brim of his hat when he passed the porter's box. And Jenny Saphir always made a point of sending away her maid, even before he came. This is the man whom we have to find."

"Has he left no traces?"

"None at all. It is obvious that we have to deal with a very clever scoundrel, who prepared his crime beforehand and committed it with every possible chance of escaping unpunished. His arrest would be a great feather in our cap. I rely on you, Ganimard."

"Ah, you rely on me, chief?" replied the inspector. "Well, we shall see . . . we shall see. . . . I don't say no. . . . Only . . ."

He seemed in a very nervous condition, and his agitation struck M. Dudouis.

"Only," continued Ganimard,

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"only I swear . . . do you hear, chief? I swear . . ."

"What do you swear?"

"Nothing. . . . We shall see, chief . . . we shall see. . . ."

Ganimard did not finish his sentence until he was outside, alone. And he finished it aloud, stamping his foot, in a tone of the most violent anger:

"Only, I swear to Heaven that the arrest shall be effected by my own means, without my employing a single one of the clues with which that villain has supplied me. Ah, no! Ah, no! . . ."

Railing against Lupin, furious at being mixed up in this business and resolved, nevertheless, to get to the bottom of it, he wandered aimlessly about the streets. His brain was seething with irritation; and he tried to adjust his ideas a little and to discover, among the chaotic facts, some trifling detail, unperceived by all, unsuspected by Lupin himself, that might lead him to success.

He lunched hurriedly at a bar, resumed his stroll and suddenly stopped, petrified, astounded and confused. He was walking under the gateway of the very house in the Rue de Surène to which Lupin had enticed him a few hours earlier! A force stronger than his own will was drawing him there once more. The solution of the problem lay there. There and there alone were all the elements of the truth. Do and say what he would, Lupin's assertions were so precise, his calculations so accurate, that, worried to the innermost recesses of his being by so prodigious a display of perspicacity, he could not do other than take up the work at the point where his enemy had left it.

Abandoning all further resistance, he climbed the three flights of stairs. The door of the flat was open. No one had touched the exhibits. He put them in his pocket and walked away.

From that moment, he reasoned and acted, so to speak, mechanically, under the influence of the master whom he could not choose but obey.

Admitting that the unknown person whom he was seeking lived in the neighborhood of the Pont-Neuf, it became necessary to discover, somewhere between that bridge and the Rue de Berne, the first-class confectioner's shop, open in the evenings, at which the cakes were bought. This did not take long to find. A pastry cook near the Gare Saint-Lazare showed him some little cardboard boxes, identical in material and shape with the one in Ganimard's possession. Moreover, one of the shopgirls remembered having served, on the previous evening, a gentleman whose face was almost concealed in the collar of his fur coat, but whose eyeglass she had happened to notice.

"That's one clue checked," thought the inspector. "Our man wears an eyeglass."

He next collected the pieces of the racing paper and showed them to a news vender, who easily recognized the *Turf Illustré*. Ganimard at once went to the offices of the *Turf* and

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asked to see the list of subscribers. Going through the list, he jotted down the names and addresses of all those who lived anywhere near the Pont-Neuf and principally — because Lupin had said so — those on the left bank of the river.

He then went back to the Criminal Investigation Department, took half a dozen men and packed them off with the necessary instructions.

At seven o'clock in the evening, the last of these men returned and brought good news with him. A certain M. Prévailles, a subscriber to the *Turf*, occupied an entresol flat on the Quai des Augustins. On the previous evening, he left his place, wearing a fur coat, took his letters and his paper, the *Turf Illustré*, from the porter's wife, walked away and returned home at midnight. This M. Prévailles wore a single eyeglass. He was a regular race-goer and himself owned several hacks which he either rode himself or jobbed out.

The inquiry had taken so short a time and the results obtained were so exactly in accordance with Lupin's predictions that Ganimard felt quite overcome on hearing the detective's report. Once more he was measuring the prodigious extent of the resources at Lupin's disposal. Never in the course of his life — and Ganimard was already well advanced in years — had he come across such perspicacity, such a quick and far-seeing mind.

He went in search of M. Dudouis.

"Everything's ready, chief. Have you a warrant?"

"Eh?"

"I said, everything is ready for the arrest, chief."

"You know the name of Jenny Saphir's murderer?"

"Yes."

"But how? Explain yourself."

Ganimard had a sort of scruple of conscience, blushed a little and nevertheless replied:

"An accident, chief. The murderer threw everything that was likely to compromise him into the Seine. Part of the parcel was picked up and handed to me."

"By whom?"

"A boatman who refused to give his name, for fear of getting into trouble. But I had all the clues I wanted. It was not so difficult as I expected."

And the inspector described how he had gone to work.

"And you call that an accident!" cried M. Dudouis. "And you say that it was not difficult! Why, it's one of your finest performances! Finish it yourself, Ganimard, and be prudent."

Ganimard was eager to get the business done. He went to the Quai des Augustins with his men and distributed them around the house. He questioned the portress, who said that her tenant took his meals out of doors, but made a point of looking in after dinner.

A little before nine o'clock, in fact, leaning out of her window, she warned Ganimard, who at once gave a low whistle. A gentleman in a tall hat and a fur coat was coming along the pave-

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ment beside the Seine. He crossed the road and walked up to the house.

Ganimard stepped forward:

"M. Prévailles, I believe?"

"Yes, but who are you?"

"I have a commission to . . ."

He had not time to finish his sentence. At the sight of the men appearing out of the shadow, Prévailles quickly retreated to the wall and faced his adversaries, with his back to the door of a shop on the ground floor, the shutters of which were closed.

"Stand back!" he cried.

His right hand brandished a heavy stick, while his left was slipped behind him and seemed to be trying to open the door.

Ganimard had an impression that the man might escape through this way and through some secret outlet:

"None of this nonsense," he said, moving closer to him. "You're caught. . . . You had better come quietly."

But, just as he was laying hold of Prévailles's stick, Ganimard remembered the warning which Lupin gave him: Prévailles was left-handed; and it was his revolver for which he was feeling behind his back.

The inspector ducked his head. He had noticed the man's sudden movement. Two reports rang out.

A second later, Prévailles received a blow under the chin from the butt end of a revolver, which brought him down where he stood. He was entered at the Dépôt soon after nine o'clock.

Ganimard enjoyed a great reputation even at that time. But this capture, so quickly effected, by such very simple means, and at once made public by the police, won him a sudden celebrity. Prévailles was forthwith saddled with all the murders that had remained unpunished; and the newspapers vied with one another in extolling Ganimard's prowess.

The case was conducted briskly at the start. It was first of all ascertained that Prévailles, whose real name was Thomas Derocq, had already been in trouble. Moreover, the search instituted in his rooms, while not supplying any fresh proofs, at least led to the discovery of a ball of whipcord similar to the cord used for doing up the parcel and also to the discovery of daggers which would have produced a wound similar to the wounds on the victim.

But, on the eighth day, everything was changed. Until then Prévailles had refused to reply to the questions put to him; but now, assisted by his counsel, he pleaded a circumstantial alibi and maintained that he was at the Folies-Bergère on the night of the murder.

As a matter of fact, the pockets of his dinner jacket contained the counterfoil of a stall ticket and a program of the performance, both bearing the date of that evening.

"An alibi prepared in advance," objected the examining magistrate.

"Prove it," said Prévailles.

The prisoner was confronted with the witnesses for the prosecution. The young lady from the confectioner's "thought she knew" the gentleman with the eyeglass. The hall porter in

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the Rue de Berne "thought he knew" the gentleman who used to come to see Jenny Saphir. But nobody dared to make a more definite statement.

The examination, therefore, led to nothing of a precise character, provided no solid basis whereon to found a serious accusation.

The judge sent for Ganimard and told him of his difficulty.

"I can't possibly persist, at this rate. There is no evidence to support the charge."

"But surely you are convinced in your own mind, monsieur *le juge d'instruction!* Prévailles would never have resisted his arrest unless he was guilty."

"He says that he thought he was being assaulted. He also says that he never set eyes on Jenny Saphir; and, as a matter of fact, we can find no one to contradict his assertion. Then again, admitting that the sapphire has been stolen, we have not been able to find it at his flat."

"Nor anywhere else," suggested Ganimard.

"Quite true, but that is no evidence against him. I'll tell you what we shall want, M. Ganimard, and that very soon: the other end of this red scarf."

"The other end?"

"Yes, for it is obvious that, if the murderer took it away with him, the reason was that the stuff is stained with the marks of the blood on his fingers."

Ganimard made no reply. For several days he had felt that the whole business was tending to this conclusion. There was no other proof possible. Given the silk scarf — and in no other circumstances — Prévailles's guilt was certain. Now Ganimard's position required that Prévailles's guilt should be established. He was responsible for the arrest, it had cast a glamor around him, he had been praised to the skies as the most formidable adversary of criminals; and he would look absolutely ridiculous if Prévailles were released.

Unfortunately, the one and only indispensable proof was in Lupin's pocket. How was he to get hold of it?

Ganimard cast about, exhausted himself with fresh investigations, went over the inquiry from start to finish, spent sleepless nights in turning over the mystery of the Rue de Berne, studied the records of Prévailles's life, sent ten men hunting after the sapphire. Everything was useless.

On the 28th of December, the examining magistrate stopped him in one of the passages of the Law Courts:

"Well, M. Ganimard, any news?"

"No, monsieur *le juge d'instruction.*"

"Then I shall dismiss the case."

"Wait one day longer."

"What's the use? We want the other end of the scarf; have you got it?"

"I shall have it tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!"

"Yes, but please lend me the piece in your possession."

"What if I do?"

"If you do, I promise to let you have the whole scarf complete."

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"Very well, that's understood."

Ganimard followed the examining magistrate to his room and came out with the piece of silk:

"Hang it all!" he growled. "Yes, I will go and fetch the proof and I shall have it too . . . always presuming that Master Lupin has the courage to keep the appointment."

In point of fact, he did not doubt for a moment that Master Lupin would have this courage, and that was just what exasperated him. Why had Lupin insisted on this meeting? What was his object, in the circumstances?

Anxious, furious and full of hatred, he resolved to take every precaution necessary not only to prevent his falling into a trap himself, but to make his enemy fall into one, now that the opportunity offered. And, on the next day, which was the 29th of December, the date fixed by Lupin, after spending the night in studying the old manor house in the Rue de Surène and convincing himself that there was no other outlet than the front door, he warned his men that he was going on a dangerous expedition and arrived with them on the field of battle.

He posted them in a café and gave them formal instructions: if he showed himself at one of the third-floor windows, or if he failed to return within an hour, the detectives were to enter the house and arrest anyone who tried to leave it.

The chief inspector made sure that his revolver was in working order and that he could take it from his pocket easily. Then he went upstairs.

He was surprised to find things as he had left them, the doors open and the locks broken. After ascertaining that the windows of the principal room looked out on the street, he visited the three other rooms that made up the flat. There was no one there.

"Master Lupin was afraid," he muttered, not without a certain satisfaction.

"Don't be silly," said a voice behind him.

Turning round, he saw an old workman, wearing a housepainter's long smock, standing in the doorway.

"You needn't bother your head," said the man. "It's I, Lupin. I have been working in the painter's shop since early morning. This is when we knock off for breakfast. So I came upstairs."

He looked at Ganimard with a quizzing smile and cried:

"'Pon my word, this is a gorgeous moment I owe you, old chap! I wouldn't sell it for ten years of your life; and yet you know how I love you! What do you think of it, artist? Wasn't it well thought out and well foreseen? Foreseen from alpha to omega? Did I understand the business? Did I penetrate the mystery of the scarf? I'm not saying that there were no holes in my argument, no links missing in the chain. . . . But what a masterpiece of intelligence! Ganimard, what a reconstruction of events! What an intuition of every-

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thing that had taken place and of everything that was going to take place, from the discovery of the crime to your arrival here in search of a proof! What really marvelous divination! Have you the scarf?"

"Yes, half of it. Have you the other?"

"Here it is. Let's compare."

They spread the two pieces of silk on the table. The cuts made by the scissors corresponded exactly. Moreover, the colors were identical.

"But I presume," said Lupin, "that this was not the only thing you came for. What you are interested in seeing is the marks of the blood. Come with me, Ganimard: it's rather dark in here."

They moved into the next room, which, though it overlooked the courtyard, was lighter; and Lupin held his piece of silk against the windowpane:

"Look," he said, making room for Ganimard.

The inspector gave a start of delight. The marks of the five fingers and the print of the palm were distinctly visible. The evidence was undeniable. The murderer had seized the stuff in his bloodstained hand, in the same hand that had stabbed Jenny Saphir, and tied the scarf round her neck.

"And it is the print of a left hand," observed Lupin. "Hence my warning, which had nothing miraculous about it, you see. For, though I admit, friend of my youth, that you may look upon me as a superior intelligence, I won't have you treat me as a wizard."

Ganimard had quickly pocketed the piece of silk. Lupin nodded his head in approval:

"Quite right, old boy, it's for you. I'm so glad you're glad! And, you see, there was no trap about all this . . . only the wish to oblige . . . a service between friends, between pals. . . . And also, I confess, a little curiosity. . . . Yes, I wanted to examine this other piece of silk, the one the police had. . . . Don't be afraid: I'll give it back to you. . . . Just a second. . . ."

Lupin, with a careless movement, played with the tassel at the end of his half of the scarf, while Ganimard listened to him in spite of himself:

"How ingenious these little bits of women's work are! Did you notice one detail in the maid's evidence? Jenny Saphir was very handy with her needle and used to make all her own hats and frocks. It is obvious that she made this scarf herself. . . . I noticed that from the first. Besides, I am naturally curious, as I have already told you, and I made a thorough examination of the piece of silk which you have just put in your pocket. Inside the tassel, I found a little sacred medal, which the poor girl had stitched into it to bring her luck. Touching, isn't it, Ganimard? A little medal of Our Lady of Good Succor."

The inspector felt greatly puzzled and did not take his eyes off the other. And Lupin continued:

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"Then I said to myself, 'How interesting it would be to explore the other half of the scarf, the one which the police will find round the victim's neck!' For this other half, which I hold in my hands at last, is finished off in the same way . . . so I shall be able to see if it has a hiding place too and what's inside it. . . . But look, my friend, isn't it cleverly made? And so simple! All you have to do is to take a skein of red cord and braid it round a wooden cup, leaving a little recess, a little empty space in the middle, very small, of course, but large enough to hold a medal of a saint . . . or anything. . . . A precious stone, for instance. . . . Such as a sapphire. . . ."

At that moment he finished pushing back the silk cord and, from the hollow of a cup he took between his thumb and forefinger a wonderful blue stone, perfect in respect of size and purity.

"Ha! What did I tell you, friend of my youth?"

He raised his head. The inspector had turned livid and was staring wild-eyed, as though fascinated by the stone that sparkled before him. He at last realized the whole plot:

"You dirty scoundrel!" he muttered, repeating the insults which he had used at the first interview. "You scum of the earth!"

The two men were standing one against the other.

"Give me back that," said the inspector.

Lupin held out the piece of silk.

"And the sapphire," said Ganimard, in a peremptory tone.

"Don't be silly."

"Give it back, or . . ."

"Or what, you idiot!" cried Lupin. "Look here, do you think I put you on to this soft thing for nothing?"

"Give it back!"

"You haven't noticed what I've been about, that's plain! What! For four weeks I've kept you on the move like a deer; and you want to! . . . Come, Ganimard, old chap, pull yourself together! . . . Don't you see that you've been playing the good dog for four weeks on end? . . . Fetch it, Rover! . . . There's a nice blue pebble over there, which master can't get at. Hunt it, Ganimard, fetch it . . . bring it to master. . . . Ah, he's his master's own good little dog! . . . Sit up! Beg! . . . Does'ms want a bit of sugar, then? . . ."

Ganimard, containing the anger that seethed within him, thought only of one thing, summoning his detectives. And, as the room in which he now was looked out on the courtyard, he tried gradually to work his way round to the communicating door. He would then run to the window and break one of the panes.

"All the same," continued Lupin, "what a pack of dunderheads you and the rest must be! You've had the silk all this time and not one of you ever thought of feeling it, not one of you ever asked himself the reason why the poor girl hung on to her scarf. Not one of you! You just acted at haphazard, without reflecting,

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without foreseeing anything. . . ."

The inspector had attained his object. Taking advantage of a second when Lupin had turned away from him, he suddenly wheeled round and grasped the door handle. But an oath escaped him: the handle did not budge.

Lupin burst into a fit of laughing:

"Not even that! You did not even foresee that! You lay a trap for me and you won't admit that I may perhaps smell the thing out beforehand. . . . And you allow yourself to be brought into this room without asking whether I am not bringing you here for a particular reason and without remembering that the locks are fitted with a special mechanism. Come now, speaking frankly, what do you think of it yourself?"

"What do I think of it?" roared Ganimard, beside himself with rage.

He had drawn his revolver and was pointing it straight at Lupin's face.

"Hands up!" he cried. "That's what I think of it!"

Lupin placed himself in front of him and shrugged his shoulders:

"Sold again!" he said.

"Hands up, I say, once more!"

"And sold again, say I. Your deadly weapon won't go off."

"What?"

"Old Catherine, your housekeeper, is in my service. She damped the charges this morning while you were having your breakfast coffee."

Ganimard made a furious gesture, pocketed the revolver and rushed at Lupin.

"Well?" said Lupin, stopping him short with a well aimed kick on the shin.

Their clothes were almost touching. They exchanged defiant glances, the glances of two adversaries who mean to come to blows. Nevertheless, there was no fight. The recollection of the earlier struggles made any present struggle useless. And Ganimard, who remembered all his past failures, his vain attacks, Lupin's crushing reprisals, did not lift a limb. There was nothing to be done. He felt it. Lupin had forces at his command against which any individual force simply broke to pieces. So what was the good?

"I agree," said Lupin, in a friendly voice, as though answering Ganimard's unspoken thought, "you would do better to let things be as they are. Besides, friend of my youth, think of all that this incident has brought you: fame, the certainty of quick promotion and, thanks to that, the prospect of a happy and comfortable old age! Surely, you don't want the discovery of the sapphire and the head of poor Arsène Lupin in addition! It wouldn't be fair. To say nothing of the fact that poor Arsène Lupin saved your life. . . . Yes, sir! Who warned you, at this very spot, that Prévailles was left-handed? . . . And is this the way you thank me? It's not pretty of you, Ganimard. Upon my word, you make me blush for you!"

While chattering, Lupin had gone through the same performance as

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Ganimard and was now near the door. Ganimard saw that his foe was about to escape him. Forgetting all prudence, he tried to block his way and received a tremendous butt in the stomach, which sent him rolling.

Lupin dexterously touched a spring, turned the handle, opened the door and slipped away, roaring with laughter as he went.

Twenty minutes later, when Ganimard at last succeeded in joining his men, one of them said to him: —

"A house painter left the house, as his mates were coming back from breakfast, and put a letter in my hand. 'Give that to your governor,' he said. 'Which governor?' I asked; but he was gone. I suppose it's meant for you."

"Let's have it."

Ganimard opened the letter. It was hurriedly scribbled in pencil and contained these words: —

This is to warn you, friend of my youth, against excessive credulity. When a fellow tells you that the cartridges in your revolver are damp, however great your confidence in that fellow may be, even though his name be Arsène Lupin, never allow yourself to be taken in. Fire first; and, if the fellow hops the twig, you will have acquired the proof (1) that the cartridges are not damp; and (2) that old Catherine is the most honest and respectable of housekeepers.

One of these days, I hope to have the pleasure of making her acquaintance.

Meanwhile, friend of my youth, believe me always affectionately and sincerely yours,

ARSÈNE LUPIN

NEXT MONTH . . .

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE will bring you:

Georges Simenon's	A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH
Kem Bennett's	LET FREEDOM RING
Selwyn Jepson's	BY THE SWORD
Percival Wilde's	THE WAY TO FREEDOM
Q. Patrick's	MURDER IN THE ALPS
Lillian de la Torre's	THE TRIPLE-LOCK'D ROOM
Joyce Kilmer's	WHITEMAIL

and other stories by *Billy Rose*, *Holloway Horn*, *Ellery Queen* and *Guy de Vry* — also *EQMM's* monthly book review, DETECTIVE DIRECTORY.

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How many writers have the extraordinary talent, precocious or otherwise, to have their first book published while they are still in their teens? Not many surely, but Michael Arlen is one. He was only eighteen when his first novel saw the light of print. He was only twenty-four when THESE CHARMING PEOPLE, *that highly sophisticated book of short stories, brought him a modest success. And he was still under thirty when* THE GREEN HAT *made him an international celebrity. It is said that* THE GREEN HAT *earned Michael Arlen half a million dollars in book royalties alone, and the motion picture (starring Greta Garbo) and the play (starring Katharine Cornell) must have added substantially to the book's income. Today, the critics speak airily of* THE GREEN HAT *as "superficial" and "dated" — yes, those harsh words about the most talked-of novel of its time; but the critics, it is well known, have often borrowed the womanly prerogative of changing their minds, and no matter what harsh words have been flung in Mr. Arlen's direction in the past, no critic ever had the courage to deny that "Mike" has wit and imagination, that "he knows how to tell a story" . . .*

YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

by MICHAEL ARLEN

AT TEN O'CLOCK ONE EVENING NOT long ago there was not, in the considered opinion of the famous amateur golfer Johnnie ("Jock") Winterset, a more happily married man, a prouder father, and a more contented husband than Jock Winterset.

By ten fifteen of the same evening it was, in an emphatic and moving statement he made to his wife Stella, established beyond all doubt that there was not in all the United Kingdom a man, husband, and father lower down in the scale of happiness than poor Jock Winterset.

Preparing to leave the house in the grand manner, his parting words to Stella, touched with the dignity of melancholy self-criticism, were also in the grand manner. For Jock Winterset, surprisingly enough in an Englishman with a good eye for a ball, could speak English with reasonable facility, if not perhaps quite fluently.

As a youth he had been a martyr to the grunting habit, a malady which annually claims innumerable victims in England and America, but he had outgrown this. In due course he had

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mastered all the better-known labials and vowel sounds, and had even won a certain reputation among grunters as an able speechmaker in his triumphant career as Captain of the School, a Blue, a Walker Cup player, and Amateur Champion (twice).

He said to Stella: "You have let me live in a fool's paradise for the nine years of our married life. I thought you loved me. I thought, like a fathead, that you were even proud of me sometimes."

He said: "I realize now that you have been acting and pretending all the time — out of pity, not to hurt my feelings. I have never loved anyone but you, Stella — anyway, not since I met you. But you tell me I love only myself."

He said: "I know I'm not clever. I know I'm no good at anything except games. But I'm not fool enough to think that there can be any happiness in a marriage when — when the teamwork has broken down — that is, when a fellow's wife tells him in so many words that she has no respect for him at all."

He said: "I shall have to think this out, Stella. We have to think above all of our boy. I am going now, and ——"

"You were going," Stella pointed out, "anyway." Then, quite unlike herself, she suddenly giggled. "Just suppose you missed the 11:10 at Euston — then some other big thinker would win the North of England Championship tomorrow."

"I don't suppose," he said bitterly, "that I shall even qualify, with this on my mind."

"Why not?" said Stella with surprise. "Just think of nothing but the ball. You'll find it quite easy, since you have thought of nothing else for the nine years we've been married."

Whereupon Jock Winterset, forgetting all about the grand manner, picked up his small suitcase and large bag of clubs, and banged out of the house into the waiting taxi.

"Ever heard," he said savagely to the taxidriver, "of lightning?"

"Yessir. My missus uses it regular on our Bill. It works wunnerful."

"Go," said Jock with restraint, "like lightning in the general direction of Euston Station."

He had ample time, in point of fact. But his nerves called for hurry, speed.

His thoughts sped faster than the taxi. The row with Stella had arisen from an argument about their son Gerald, then just on seven years old. Jerry had been laid up the last day or so with a slightly cut finger which had become inflamed.

Jock had suggested — casually, not dreaming of any opposition — that young Jerry should start taking golf lessons from a good professional as soon as his finger was better. "My father," he said, "had me learn the feel of a club when I was Jerry's age, and I have never regretted it."

"Yes, dear," said Stella. She was knitting.

"In fact," said Jock, "that's what made me."

"Yes, dear," said Stella.

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She was slender and dark-haired, with wide, gray, thoughtful eyes. She was much loved by her friends, and silly people were rather frightened of her.

"There's nothing," said Jock, "like learning to swing a club in a natural way when you're a kid. Like the caddies."

"Jerry," said Stella, going on knitting, "isn't going to be a caddy."

"You know what I mean, Stella. A really first-class amateur — someone who might win the Open. Golly, I'd be proud if a son of mine ——"

"Ours, dear," said Stella.

"Of course, darling. But wouldn't it be marvelous if Jerry were really in the top class? You can see now that he's got a pretty good eye, and ——"

Stella put down her knitting and looked up at him. She did this very deliberately, and suddenly Jock felt uncomfortable. For a second he could not understand why. Then he realized uneasily that a stranger, cold and unfamiliar, was measuring him from the depths of the wide gray eyes he knew so well.

"It is time I told you something, Jock. Perhaps I should have told you before, but I have been trying not to hurt your feelings. Jerry — our son — is not going to take golf lessons now. In due course he is going to learn how to play golf and tennis and other games in the normal undistinguished way, and when he grows up he is going to play them — I hope — in the normal undistinguished way.

"He is not going to play golf or tennis like a first-class amateur. I do not want our son to be a first-class amateur but a tenth-class amateur. Or eleventh-class. That will be much better for him and his character.

"For I hope that our son will grow up to be a reasonably thoughtful, hard-working young man who will be able to get a decent job for himself on his own merits and not because other good chaps admire him because he is plus three.

"Also, I hope that in due course he will be able to support a wife and children with his own work, and not with the money his dear proud old daddy gives him because he can regularly break 70 at Addington. And that reminds me, Jock, that you had better play your best tomorrow. The quarter's rent is due very soon and if your dear proud old daddy doesn't stump up once again ——"

Jock, sitting taut in the whirling taxi, could not remember what he had said then. He had been too shocked, too bewildered, too astounded, too flummoxed. He had always thought that she had taken their occasional financial troubles gaily — like a good sport — the way he had.

It was only gradually that the real meaning of her words had penetrated his bewildered mind. So she didn't want Jerry to be like his father. She wanted their son to be like anyone else *but* his father. She wanted Jerry to be a decent, hard-working man whom she could respect. That meant she didn't respect him, Jock, and never had. That meant . . .

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Whereupon he had made his farewell speech in the grand manner.

As the taxi crossed Tottenham Court Road on the final lap to Euston, he realized bitterly that in some things she was right but that in the main ones she was wrong. He saw that he ought not to have given up so much time — so many weekdays as well as weekends — to golf. He saw that he ought to have done better for himself than be just a half-commission man in a broker's office.

But that hadn't been really all his fault. Everybody had always been so nice to him, made things easy for him, let him in on the inside of good market rises. Of course, Stella had been disappointed recently when he had refused the job of being manager and steward of Lord Teale's estate in Northumberland. She had wanted to bring up Jerry in the country, far from London. The job had been right down his street, too. Good money, comfortable house and grounds rent free, first-class horses, this and that — but an all-week job, day by day, with only a weekend here and there for golf. He couldn't be expected to keep up his game with only a day's golf here and there. It wasn't reasonable. After all, you only live once.

And what about love? What marks did Stella give him there? What about a chap being a good husband? A jolly good husband. Considerate to all. Very little to drink. Never a fling. Not like some fellows he knew.

Not by a long chalk like some fellows he knew. Always offered to take Stella with him to Le Touquet for the Buck's and White's weekends, even though she hadn't lately come with him. In fact, he'd been on the up-and-up from dawn till dusk for nearly ten years.

And was she glad? Was she grateful?

She was so thumping glad and grateful that she had landed him such a resounding sock on the jaw that he'd never be the same man again. Anyway, not to her. Not likely.

He'd start batting an eye around now. He'd bat two. He'd hit the high spots, he'd hit the hot spots. Like other chaps. There wasn't any lack of high-stepping Snow Whites who didn't despise a man just because he had been Amateur Champion. Not likely.

The taxi curved into Gordon Square. It curved spiritedly, and the front left wheel crashed smartly into the rear of a large handsome car at the curb, parked too near the corner. The taxi, rocking enormously, bounced indignantly sideways and stood shuddering.

Jock found himself, he didn't in the least know how, crouching on his hands and knees in the middle of the road. He must have jumped out. He was crouching intently, like a man about to sprint, a ridiculous position.

Stunned, but quite unhurt, blinking at the lamplight, he took in the half-wrecked taxi, which somehow looked idiotically proud of itself at

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still being on all four wheels. Then he took in the taxidriver, also apparently unhurt and still at the wheel, looking around him with an air of profound astonishment. And then he saw his bag of clubs, also spilled on the road near him.

That decided him. He'd go while the going was good. Or he'd never catch his train. It was the work of a moment to snap at the still astonished and speechless driver to go back to his house for payment of his fare, snatch up his suitcase and golf-bag, and leg it towards the station.

Lucky it hadn't been worse. A nice thing it would have been to have to scratch from tomorrow's fixture. He could see the newspapers.

JOCK WINTERSET HURT IN TAXI CRASH. EX-AMATEUR CHAMPION BADLY INJURED. MAY NEVER PLAY GOLF AGAIN.

Thanks a lot, he thought. Thank you, God.

Glancing back over his shoulder, he saw a small crowd already around the taxidriver, who appeared to be addressing them indignantly. Then he turned into the brightly lit Euston Road, just opposite Euston Station.

If anyone had told Jock Winterset that something called his subconscious mind could govern his actions, he would have thought his leg was being pulled in some tiresome, highbrow way. But it could have been only his subconscious mind which made him do what he now did, for it was done without any previous deliberation. As he hurried under the archway to Euston Station he suddenly slewed right round and strode back towards the Euston Road.

He wasn't going to catch that train or any train. His mind had suddenly been made up for him. And he wasn't going to play golf tomorrow. Just like that.

Putting his suitcase and clubs down at a corner, he waited for a passing taxi. One soon came. He was going straight back home to Stella. Straight back — bungo.

That taxi accident had been a sign. He hadn't been hurt, but it had been a sign, all right. It had been the writing on the wall, and the writing had said: *Go back home.* And so he was going back home.

Providence had tipped him the wink, and no mistake. No use kidding himself. Providence had seen him leave Stella in anger, had aimed a shrewd blow at his taxi, thrown him out on his ear, and had tipped him off in so many words to leg it back to Stella and tell her that he, J. Winterset, had forgotten to thank her for all the love and care and unselfishness she had expended during their married lives, in taking care of him and their son.

And what had he done all these years but sit back and admire himself and wait for her to admire him? Had he ever — sincerely, deep down in himself — given thanks for his undeserved good fortune in being married

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to a dear companion, a good wife, an unselfish mother, and a beautiful woman? No, sir. All he'd done had been to take everything in his stride, for granted, as his right.

Sitting in the taxi, he felt very cool and calm. He seemed to stand at an open window and watch himself walking outside, walking down the years since he had left school as Captain of Cricket, Captain of the Fifteen, head school-prefect, and Captain of the School. A good man, Winterset. Sound chap, Jock. For he's a jolly good fellow.

And he had been Captain of the School ever since: never failing to say "sir" to his elders or superiors with the proper inflection of respect mingled with man-to-man good-humor; always considerate to his inferiors in that brusque smiling way which takes for granted that lesser men will forgive you for making exacting demands on them; always ready to throw a word of praise to a fag who had done well; always good-humoredly expecting ordinary daily chores to be done for him by people who would only be too glad to do them for him; always a little remote and isolated in even the most intimate companionship — in fact, the Captain of the School. That is, neither boy nor man.

Neither boy nor man.

He understood now why he had so often caught Stella looking at him with a kind of puzzled thoughtfulness. She had been thinking, "Neither boy nor man. How am I to live my life out with someone who is neither? What shall we talk about as we grow older? Shall we always talk, as we do now, of games and who-will-beat-whom and competitive trivialities and why-can't-we-putt-like-the-Americans?

"He is a dear and kind man, and I love him, but I can't trust him to be a responsible man and I can't rely on him to teach his son anything of the responsibilities of life. He will be happy as long as he has got fags around him, and he will always be kind to his fags. Poor Jock, he is going to be so unhappy one day when his fags suddenly turn on him. I am head-fag, and I must try my hardest never to turn on him, as he will be so hurt."

Well, she had tried her hardest, dear Stella, and she had broken down for the first time only that evening — after nine years.

And hadn't he been hurt? Crumbs, he'd nearly taken the count. Just because the fag had dared to speak her mind to the Captain of the School without man-to-man good humor.

A minute or two more, and he'd fix all that. He was going to take that job of old Teale's, which he knew was still open. From now on he would earn his own keep and he would play golf like normal busy men played golf, not sacrificing their lives to it. Then he realized that it was a long time since he had seen Stella smile with all her heart. He could see her dear gray eyes light up and the happi-

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ness ripple and flash across her sensitive, often too-serious face.

Only a few minutes later Jock was laughing bitterly to himself about these thoughts, these dreams. There was no one to hear him laugh. Stella had gone out. All dressed up and fit to kill in her best evening frock, Stella had been about to go out when he arrived back unexpectedly. There was a young man with her, a pleasant athletic-looking young fellow called Guy something, and they were standing around in the sitting-room like people waiting for a taxi.

Stella's surprise at his unexpected return was no more than casual.

"Jock, you missed the train!"

He stared. She looked lovely in that white frock, with her dark hair curled severely back.

"Yes," he said. "Just."

"But how? You allowed yourself plenty of time."

"My taxi." He fumbled. "Caught a wing in another wheel — argument, and so on — and here I am." He warmed to his story. Well, it was a good let-out. "I left him still arguing — he will be round tomorrow for his fare."

"Bad luck," she said.

A taxi stopped outside.

"Here's our cab," said the pleasant youth. "Want to dress and join us later, Winterset?"

Stella picked up her little white bag. The small S on it, in paste diamonds, twinkled happily and Jock blinked intently at it.

"I rang up Guy when you had gone, to take me out to dance somewhere. I feel like dancing tonight, and Barbara is giving a supper at the Embassy. Join us later, Jock. Since you are not playing tomorrow you can stay up late for once. We haven't danced for ages."

He saw them towards the door. The dry familiar perfume she always used when going out at night, dimly bitter-sweet like a faint echo of the tuberoses she loved, seemed suddenly to penetrate his nerves as something unfamiliar and hateful.

"Think I'll go to bed," he said. "Give my love to Barbara. Jerry all right?"

"Nurse took his temperature again just after you left. Normal. Good night, dear."

All he could think of, when he was alone, was to thank his stars that he hadn't made a prize fool of himself by blurting out the real reason why he had come back. Well, Providence had handed him a lemon, all right. Thrown it slap in his face, what's more.

All the same, he could not make it out. It was so unlike Stella. For one thing, Barbara wasn't a favorite friend by a long chalk; for another, she didn't enjoy casually arranged supper-parties; and above all, it was absolutely contrary to character for Stella to leave the house at night if Jerry was not *absolutely* well. Particularly when a temporary nurse was in charge. For their own nurse, good old Pye, had been called away to her sister, who was seriously ill, a week ago, and this one was a temporary

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until she came back in a day or so.

Pacing about his dressing-room, he suddenly felt himself smiling. Of course, there was an answer. Stella would come back any minute. That was the answer. In a fit of resentment, she had arranged to go out. Then he had returned unexpectedly, and she had felt she just had to go on with it. But she would come back now, any minute. He'd take a bet on it. His money was on Stella first, last, and all the time.

The door started opening softly.

Jock stared at it, hardly breathing. The world stood still. One, two, three. Please make it Stella. *Please.*

Stella peeped in, her dear face unhappy-happy, doubtful, uncertainly smiling. His breath came in a gasp. Well, it was a knockout. Trust the old girl to do the right thing.

"Hello, beautiful," she said. Suddenly her eyes were alight.

"Knew you'd come back," he said. He felt himself grinning frantically. He wanted to cry. She ran to him, climbed over him, pressed her cheek to his.

"Knew you hadn't missed your train," she whispered.

"Knew you'd come back," he said. He blinked quickly. Well, this was life, all right. This was the stuff.

She nibbled his ear. "Listen," she whispered, "it stuck out a mile that you hadn't missed your train. Jerry could give you points at fibbing. Listen, fish-face. I was so mad with you for leaving me for the station without any goodbye kiss, I arranged to go out. Then you came back, looking as though you had just lost a jujube. Just like Jerry, maybe younger. Knew you hadn't missed your train. Listen, mister. Sorry about what I said before you left. Apologize humbly, cross my heart."

"I'll tell you," he said.

"All," she said. She nibbled his ear. "Tell me All. Came the dawn."

So he told her why he had suddenly turned back at the station, and he told her all his thoughts in the taxi coming back home.

"That bit of an accident," she said, "was Providence, all right."

"You bet," he said.

"We would never have been the same two people again, Jock, if we had had this unmade-up row between us for even two days. Unmade-up rows get very septic, no matter what you do to heal them later on. I am much obliged to you, mister, for coming back. I've always thought very highly of you as a husband, cross my heart. But now — crumbs, it's just miraculous, after nearly ten years of marriage to fancy a fellow so much."

"Stella, I am looking forward like anything to living up north. I can't think why I hesitated a moment. Imagine how Jerry will love having a pony of his own."

They were happy. He couldn't remember when he had been so happy. This was the stuff, all right. Stella said he would miss playing good golf. Well, what of it? A chap had to make the best of life. You had to do your best all round, not just in one thing.

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You only live once.

Then Stella tiptoed upstairs to the nursery landing on her usual nightly visit. Every night before turning in she would listen for a moment on the dark landing outside Jerry's door, just to be comforted by his breathing. Jerry slept very noisily, so it was quite easy to hear him through the closed door. Once his adenoids were removed it would be different, of course, but meanwhile Stella and Jock were inclined to be quite proud of their son's manly snores.

Jock was in the act of starting to untie his tie when he went to the half-open door.

"Jock!" It was Stella's whisper from the dark landing above.

"What is it?"

"Come up here a minute."

When he had joined her on the dark, narrow landing, she whispered, "Listen."

It took him a second or two to realize that there was nothing to listen to except Stella's quick breathing beside him. Her fingers, icy cold, twined round his wrist. Staring at the dim shape of the closed door, they listened frantically. Then with one movement he flung the door open and switched on the light. Stella gave a cry.

Jerry wasn't there.

The bed was rumpled, empty. The room was empty. The curtains flapped in the draft. He dashed, Stella still clinging to his wrist, across the landing to Nurse's room, the day-nursery. It was empty, neat, the bed unslept in. Stella gave a little whimper. She kept on digging the knuckles of one hand into the palm of the other, staring at Jock.

He said: "This can't happen in England." It didn't sound like his own voice. His heart seemed to be flopping against his chest, like a half-dead fish. He licked his lips, and said: "There must be some explanation."

Suddenly Stella screamed, "But he's not here, Jock! Jerry's not *here!*"

She put her bent thumb between her teeth, biting it. He dashed back to Jerry's room. The draft from the open window had blown a piece of paper to the floor at the foot of the dressing-table.

This is a snatch, Winterset. If you call the police, it will be murder. We know your father has got plenty. This will cost him £2,000. It's up to you and to him, whether you want your son back or not. Instructions will follow later as to method of payment. If you agree to pay, stand at the corner of Piccadilly and Berkeley Street, at exactly eight o'clock tomorrow evening. Guess you will have come back from your golf by then. Stand there for five minutes, so one of us will see you, and then go home. We will let you know how and where we want the money paid. Get busy, Winterset. And don't call the police.

The note in his hand, he stared fixedly at the back of Jerry's hair-brush on the small green dressing-table. It was an ivory one Stella had had as a girl, with an austere black S

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on it. Jerry didn't like it because it had a handle. He wanted one like his daddy's, without a handle and very bristly. Stella had promised to get him one soon. . . .

Stella stumbled blindly out of the room, holding one arm stretched out in front of her. Staring after her, he suddenly felt calm and reasonable. One had to be reasonable. This was England. Things like this didn't happen in England. Kidnaping, threatening letters, and so on. It must be a joke.

He found he was staring at an untidy heap of colored pegs on Jerry's little bedside table. Red, black, yellow, blue. No, gray. They were the pegs of his game Peggity, at which he beat all comers. A red one had dropped to the floor.

Of course, this *must* be some kind of a joke. That idiotic note. Darn it, this was England. Anyway, he was going to call the police.

What was Stella doing? He strode out onto the landing. He'd talk sense to the old girl.

"Stella! *Stella!*"

She wasn't there. Then he saw her on the landing below, half-kneeling at the head of the stairs.

"It must be a joke," he called down. "Anyway, I'm going to call the police."

She did not seem to hear. But he could see, from the look of her back, that she was crying. And the sight of her kneeling figure overwhelmed him with love. He ran down to her.

"Look!" she whispered. Blindly, she held something up to him. It was a small red peg.

"Lord!" he said. Well, it was a knockout.

She clung to his knees, sobbing. "The clever mite! He dropped it — to tell us something. The trail of the Mohawks."

In a frantic hurry, he grabbed her wrist. "Come on, quick." He dashed down, switching on lights as he went.

"Look, another!"

There was a black peg, scarcely visible on the rug at the foot of the stairs. He dashed to the front door, but was not given time to open it.

"Here!" Stella shouted, as though he was deaf. She was by the door leading down to the basement, a yellow peg in her hand. She kept on sniffing and sniveling.

"Gimme your hankie," she said.

"Come *on!*" he said impatiently, stumbling down the dark stairs to the kitchen. "Where are the darn lights down here?"

She brushed past him to the foot of the stairs and switched on the lights. They stared frantically up and down the stone passage to the back door. It gave out onto a mews — Cherry Pond Mews. Bending down, they found a black peg in the dusty corner by the door.

"Clever chap, our Jerry!" Stella whispered.

"Bet this door is open," he said. It should have been locked and bolted. It was unlocked, all right.

Cherry Pond Mews, a roughly cobbled roadway, was lit by a lamp

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at each end. They stared excitedly up and down. Then Stella pointed dumbly. There was a peg bang in the middle of the cobbled passage.

"Must have thrown it," he said, "out of the car in which they took him away."

Stella was looking frantically around. There were a few garage-doors, but mostly ordinary house-doors. Some were painted fancy. All sorts of people had tiny houses and tiny flats in Cherry Pond Mews — artists, lonely women, whatnots. In fact, very few cars were kept there, the neighborhood having "gone down." There were dim lights here and there behind curtained first-story windows.

"Jock!" she whispered frantically.

He had gone a few steps down towards the Cherry Square opening, peering intently for more colored pegs. He was so proud of Jerry, it gave him a lump in the throat. He had a man for a son, and no mistake. He must have read in one of his adventure books about captives "leaving marked trails" and so on.

"Jock!"

Reluctantly, he went back to Stella. Her eyes were dry now; she was quivering with excitement and at the same time trying to talk sensibly, so it wasn't easy to make out what she was saying.

"Listen, I've got an idea, Jock. That 'temporary' is in this, of course — working with some man. She must have had forged references. They thought you had gone away for the night. Then I went out, suddenly. The woman saw her chance, and must have made a signal to someone out here in the mews. You came back unexpectedly, but in your dressing-room you didn't hear her slip downstairs with Jerry muffled in her arms. Listen, I'm sure I'm right. I don't think they took Jerry away in a car at all — scarcely any cars come here at night — it would have attracted notice. So they're somewhere *here*, in the mews — in one of the houses. What could be a safer place — from us — from the police — than right under our noses?"

Her excitement communicated itself to him. Heavens, she might be right. Why not? Bang under their noses. The heartless swine. They looked up and down the mews. There were faint lights behind curtains in an upper window about fifteen yards away, towards Hamlet Road.

"Who lives there?" he whispered.

"Don't know. People here come and go. Wait a minute — I've seen a dark sort of man near that door."

"English?"

"Don't know. Just dark — big, youngish, stoutish."

They were tiptoeing towards the door beneath the faintly-lighted window. A few yards from it, Stella bent down with a gasp — another peg.

"Maybe you're right," Jock said. "It's unlikely he could have thrown *this* out of a car without being spotted."

Searching frantically, they could not find any more pegs near the door.

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"He had no more," Jock whispered. "Anyhow, he couldn't have grabbed up more than a few in his fist. But this last one is pretty near that door. He might easily have dropped it *at* the door and it rolled here."

"Shall we get a policeman?" Stella said. "There's always one near the square."

Jock scarcely heard her. He was staring at the door of the small house, and he felt murderous. Heavens, what a relief it would be to get his hands on someone. Just show him someone, that's all.

"I'm barging in there," he whispered.

"Me, too," she said.

"We've just got to risk it," he said.

"But if we're wrong?" she whispered.

"That will be just too bad."

He could not think clearly of anything but that he *must* get into that house. There was a bell-push. He pressed it savagely. They could hear the bell. Nobody came.

Jock, his fingers just aching to get a grip on something, was going to press the bell again, when Stella whispered: "Light's out upstairs."

"Then we *are* right," he said. He grinned, flexing his fingers. He pressed the bell again, and at that moment the door was flung wide open and a man, a big shape against the darkness behind, asked angrily:

"What you want, you?"

"It's like this," Jock began apologetically, "we saw a light upstairs and we wanted to ask you —"

On that word Jock landed his right on the man's jaw and drove a left at his heart. As the man sagged backwards he hit him viciously again, and he crashed on his back into the dark passage.

"Leave the door open," he said to Stella, as he pushed past the man's body in the narrow hall. But he had to stop, baffled by the darkness ahead. She pushed against his back.

"There's always a switch in a hall," she whispered.

His fingers were rapidly feeling both walls of the narrow hall. He found the switch and as he pressed it down he heard Stella gasp behind him. Halfway down the narrow stairs ahead a man stood with a heavy revolver pointed at Jerry. His face was thin and hard.

"Okay," the man said. "The snatch is off. It beats me how you found us so quick. You can have your kid back. But don't move. You and the lady and the kid will just stay here quietly till we make our getaway, see?"

Behind him a woman's dim shape moved uneasily.

"The nurse!" Stella said bitterly. "Jock, that beastly nurse!"

"Don't move!" the man said. The gun in his hand was very steady. "There's a door to your right, Winterset. Get into that room, you and the lady. I'll bring the kid down to you. Start moving, but not this way."

Jock moved, but not to the door on his right. Not likely. He heard Stella behind him cry something frantically, but he went on. He had a job of work

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on hand. All his being was concentrated on getting his hands round that thin man's throat. He went on step by step, into the mouth of the big automatic.

"I'm going to shoot!" the man yelled.

Jock laughed. His foot was on the stairs now. He was going to shoot, was he? Shoot or not, he was going to have his foul neck wrung. He was going to learn it was dangerous to monkey with a man's son. There was a roaring in his ears, and a sudden livid scream from Stella far away behind him. He scarcely felt the stabbing pain high up in his left arm. His hands were round the man's throat now; he was laughing into the terrified sobbing face beneath him as he swung him down the narrow stairs. The whole world seemed to roar in his ears as, his hands tight round the man's throat, they fell together through a sickening screaming void to the foot of the stairs.

Jock fell on his left arm, and felt himself fainting, but suddenly the pain was so awful that he heard himself yell. "My arm!" he yelled, opening his eyes wide. Stella was bending over him, her eyes streaming with tears. That pulled him together. He remembered where he was.

"Jerry all right?" he whispered.

"Yes, darling, *yes!*"

"Get the police," he said faintly. "And then a doctor. My arm . . ."

"Darling, don't worry — everything's all right." She was sobbing pitifully. There were other shapes behind her. He peered painfully at the long white room he was in. His left arm, from the shoulder down, was screaming with pain.

"Jerry's all right then?" he whispered.

"You've been dreaming, sweet," Stella said, trying to smile through her tears. "Such dreams! But now they're putting you to sleep again. You had a bad taxi accident on the way to Euston, and they had to operate. . . ."

"Lucky you're alive," a voice said gruffly. His father. Lord, quite a party.

"Better let him rest now," he heard a white shape say from somewhere far away. "The morphine should be taking effect. . . ."

Drifting off, he heard Stella say: "His arm — his poor arm!"

Jock simply couldn't help trying to grin up at her from inside deep waves of lovely drifting clouds.

"He's dreaming again!" someone said.

But the old girl knew better. Trust *her*. Love — a dream? Not likely. She bent down and nibbled his ear.

"I'm with you, mister," she whispered.

She put her ear to his lips. "Don't worry, Stella," he tried to say. "You, me, Jerry — we'll manage fine . . . you only live once . . . one arm's enough — with you and Jerry."

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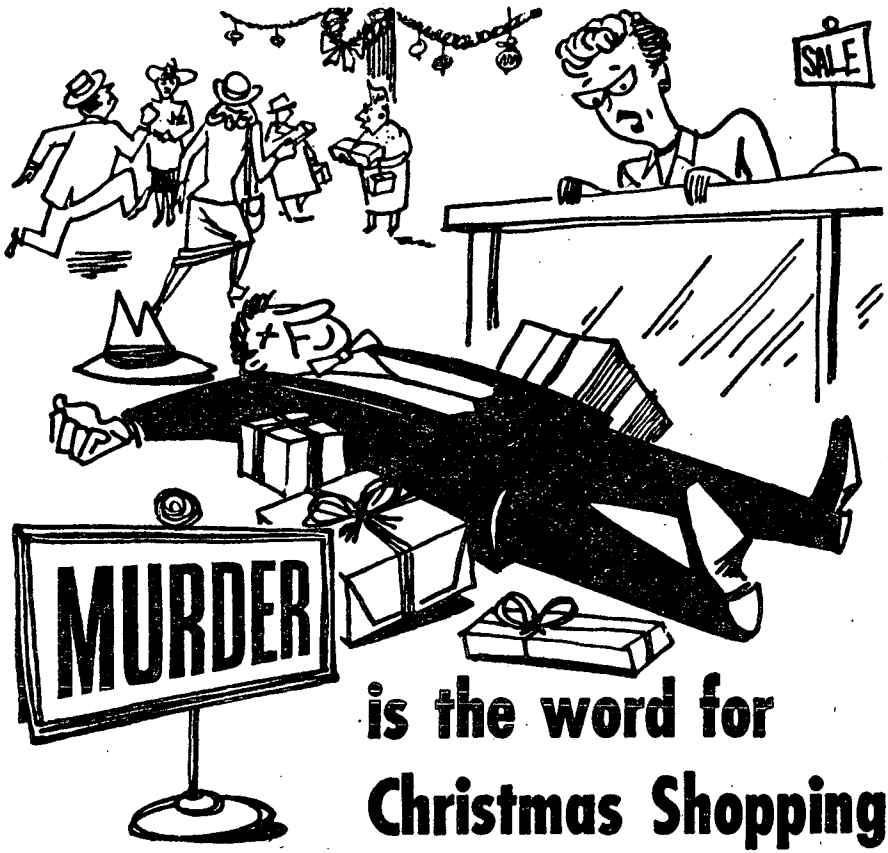

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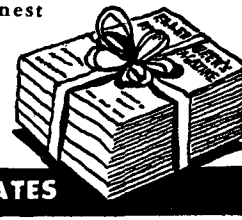

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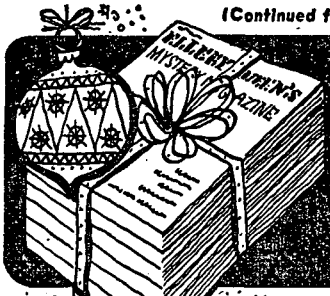

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WHEN Mason picked up the phone a female voice said: "See Carlin tonight. Tell him to get another partner. *It's a matter of life and death!*"

But Carlin had NEVER HAD a partner! *Yet 30 minutes later Carlin was MURDERED!* And then Perry rushes over to the apartment and finds—*another corpse!*

③ *Peter Cheyney's*
LADIES WON'T WAIT

YOU and another Intelligence Man looking for your buddy Rockie. Sudd *a car KILLS your fellow-operative.* RO JE'S CAR! That means HE'S DEAD, t

A woman whispers. "*Ladies won't w* —the code word to contact other op tives. You find her . . . MURDERED! in the next room. THE KILLER IS W ING FOR *YOU!*

④ *Clarence Budington Kelland's*
THE GREAT MAIL ROBBERY

THREE dresses disappear in the mails. When Inspector Scarlet goes poking through the mail bags, he finds—A CORPSE! Then a "debutante" is seen in one of the dresses — escorted by a fake "diplomat." Later one of the dress labels is found in a truck. But the driver can't explain it—he is the SECOND CORPSE!

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MURDER STRIKES at the *fox hunt*— the finger of guilt points at Sue Pe Only ONE person can clear her. But person is found DEAD! Then it dawn Sue that SHE is to be the next victim

One night, she KNOWS the kille near. She hears him moving closer. C ER . . . *CLOSER* . . .

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